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LETTERS

FROM

THE WEST OF IRELAND

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THE WEST OF IRELAND

1884

BY

ALEXANDER INNES SHAND

AUTHOR OF

'LETTERS FROM THE WEST HIGHLANDS'

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LETTERS FROM WEST IRELAND.

I.

BUNCRANA, NORTHERN DONEGAL,
August 21.

LETTERS from the West of Ireland may fairly begin with a bull, and accordingly I make no apology for dating the first from Buncrana, Buncrana being nearly the central point of the northern coast, and situated some twenty miles to the southward of Malin Head, the most northerly headland in the country. I had arranged a tour to embrace some of the most picturesque districts in the wilds of the West, but I had been told that in the outlying peninsula of Inishowen there is coast scenery almost as stern as any in the kingdom, while it is certain that it is seldom visited by tourists. In Ireland, in fact, even more than elsewhere, the tourist traffic has settled down into regular grooves. English visitors, and great numbers of Americans who are dropped or picked up at Queenstown by the Atlantic liners, hurry off on flying trips to Kerry or Connemara,

or they rush northward to the neighbourhood of the Giant's Causeway. What proves, by the way, the cockneyfied popularity of the Causeway is the recent establishment of an electrical tramway which promises to pay handsomely. The beauties of Killarney, and the grandeurs of the coast-line near Dunluce, are well worth seeing, no doubt, but the rest of Ireland has been strangely neglected. The few strangers who come to the town of Derry, where they may find comfortable quarters at Jury's Hotel, are generally attracted by the memories of the famous siege, and turn southward or eastward without going farther. Yet Derry is the beautiful entrance to a wonderfully romantic district, which has the great advantage of being very accessible. The limited mail leaving Dublin at 8.15 A.M. delivers you at Derry at 2; and from Derry there are frequent trains to Buncrana on Lough Swilly, and daily steamers to Moville on Lough Foyle. Thence there are roads to the remoter villages in Inishowen, and cars are of course to be chartered everywhere.

A more romantic situation than that of Derry it is not easy to conceive, and it gives the visitor a magnificent view of the land of promise before him. Standing on a bastion of the ancient wall beneath the column crowned by the statue of the heroic Parson Walker, we follow his fixed gaze down the channel of the Foyle, where the relieving squadron so long lay at anchor while the garrison went through agonies of hope and despair. Around is the bustle of a thriving town; below are the busy wharves where lines of steamers are loading and discharging; and in the distance is the bleak coast-line to the north-east, and the swelling grey hills of the Inish-

owen peninsula. But it is the landscape in the middle distance that is most perfect of its sort, as I saw it lighted up by brilliant sunshine. The richly wooded banks on either shore of the Foyle are studded with villas and bright country seats. The woods, embracing lawns and sloping corn-fields, come feathering down to the edge of the water; and what with the green trees and the emerald lawns, the golden corn and the grey spits of sand, there is rich variety in a colouring in which, nevertheless, nothing is out of harmony. Nor do the bright red buoys and beacons which mark out the mid-channel in any degree detract from the effect. The charms of the Inishowen peninsula are chiefly in the sea scenery. Tapering towards the point where we enter it from Derry, it is clasped in the sea-arms of Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle. The day of my arrival I embarked on a steamer carrying excursionists on an afternoon trip to Moville. The distance to Moville and back is thirty-eight miles, and the cost of the excursion was a shilling. I may safely say that seldom has a shilling been invested to better purpose. The day was beautiful, and the sail was delightful. The river Foyle rather reminds one of a Windermere at the narrowest, only that the woods being more continuous, the scenery is softer. Leaving the Foyle for the widening expanse of its Lough, we hug the shore of eastern Donegal, while looking across to the rocks and the sands of Antrim. And everywhere to the left are to be seen the signs of prosperity, where industry has been triumphing over natural difficulties. The climate is ungenial and the soil unkindly; but the barren hills are encircled by a broad belt of cultivation, carried apparently almost be-

yond the limits of the practicable. There are root-crops which seem wonderfully heavy after an experience of the effects of the English drought; there are waving fields and patches of oats, yellowing already for the scythe; and here and there are singularly green fields grazed by sleek herds of shorthorns. One fine lot of cattle I remarked in particular, and I was told it belonged to Mr Robert Hamilton, a wholesale grocer in Derry, and an enterprising grazier and agriculturist to boot. But here the farms are often of considerable extent, and the tenants are anything but chary of expenditure, judging by the persistent advertising of artificial manures, and the omnipresent depots of the Ulster Manure Company. It is a very different thing with the crofters in the interior of the peninsula, who struggle for the most part on their small hill holdings, with some three or four acres of stony arable land, and rights of grazing thrown in, in the way of commonty. The population in the interior is almost entirely Catholic, while that along the coast is of all denominations, the Presbyterians greatly predominating. And were it not for the differences of creed and communion, one should have said that the district was considerably over-churched, for sacred edifices are to be seen at frequent intervals.

A very conspicuous object is the spire of the handsome Episcopal church of Moville, topping the grassy spur of the mountains, up which the bright little watering-place is scrambling. The approach by the Lough is simply enchanting, at least on such a fortunate afternoon as I am describing. The white houses, sparkling in the sunshine, stood out against the dark background of woods; the hanging shores of the curving bay were

broken back in sharp angles; garden walls that looked like low battlements run out into salient angles of grey rock; while at the back of all, and breaking the sea-line, were the towers of the Castle of Greencastle. The place struck me as being something between our English Dartmouth and many a quiet nook in the Eastern Riviera. But I am bound to say that these rosy impressions were decidedly toned down on closer inspection. The steep streets that had struck one as so picturesque from afar, resolved themselves into bald and uneven blocks of buildings, with whitewashed fronts and flat roofs of slate. Happily nothing can seriously injure the natural beauty. The little quay is sadly dilapidated, and the rocky slopes that overlook the tiny harbour were encumbered with empty salmon-boxes and strewed with a queer variety of refuse. But there is a splendid stretch of turf, shelving down from a natural esplanade and overhanging the deep blue water of the Lough. It was studded with clumps of thorn-bushes, cut down by the sharp northern winds into fantastic shapes of settees and footstools. It was studded with comfortable seats as well; it was covered with groups of gaily-dressed people, and by troops of the ragged village children at play; and pastured promiscuously by sheep, and fowls, and geese,—though I must add that the pigs were conspicuous by their absence. Altogether it was a most exhilarating scene, and the briny air was as invigorating as the broad seaward views were inspiriting. The village faces full to the south, and is consequently protected from the cold quarter. In one of the back gardens, or rather back yards, I remarked a glorious fuchsia hedge, at least nine

feet in height, and luxuriant in proportion. No wonder the place is much frequented by the Derry folks, and, moreover, the steamers of the Anchor and other Transatlantic lines touch there on their way to and from the Clyde and the Mersey. I am informed that the municipality, however it may be composed, is backward in profiting by its natural privileges, and from all I saw I can well believe it. But, on the other hand, a great deal of money must be spent there by well-to-do private residents. The handsome and picturesquely situated church to which I have alluded would do credit to any place. Along the road leading to Greencastle and the Point of Inishowen are houses, singly or in pairs, standing in their own little woods and gardens, covered with creepers and masses of purple clematis that you might turn to admire at Ventnor or Bournemouth; the thick thorn hedges are carefully kept and trimmed; while the seats of the Hon. Mr Cochrane and Colonel Lyle, to the eastward of the highroad, and hanging over the sea, are residences that any gentleman might envy. It is true that I chanced to see everything *en couleur de rose*, for such a day as I had for my visit must be almost unprecedented. The aspect of the melodiously named place must be very different in drifting sea-fogs or drenching rain. We were belated on our return voyage to Derry. The sunset faded slowly out of a cloudless sky behind the hills to the west; the stars came twinkling out one by one; each tree and stone on the shore was mirrored in the glassy surface of the Lough; each beacon-light darted down its ruddy reflection through the pools in a flickering arrow of fire; and the air was so soft and the atmosphere so transparent, that we might

have been steaming through the Bosphorus or the Straits of Messina; so that, though it was drawing on towards nine o'clock and dinner had been waiting, I regretted our arrival at the wharves of Derry.

There was little to remind one of Southern Europe next morning. The skies were grim and the wind chilly when I started by train for Buncrana. After a time the railway strikes the eastern shore of Lough Swilly, and even under those gloomy skies the Lough seemed exceedingly beautiful. The people fondly call it the Lake of the Shadows; and it well deserves the more poetical name. A wide expanse of water, it winds about among the mountains, forming a succession of hill-locked lakes which set our sense of topography at defiance. There are green "inches" and greener promontories, surmounted by the shattered fortresses of the old chiefs of the tribes, or by modern fortifications of the time of Napoleon. The castle at Buncrana, for example, was a seat of the O'Dohertys, and it was taken from Sir Cahir of the name by one of the ancestors of the Verners. But an object of more immediate interest was the inn, and I can only say that its accommodation was a most agreeable surprise. The Lough Swilly Hotel stands, like the ruined keeps, on a grassy headland jutting out into the lake and looking down on the little harbour. There are a charming coffee-room and public sitting-room, with enormous windows and glorious views. There are bright bedrooms, comfortably furnished. The cooking, though simple, is unexceptionable; although there is no wine *carte*, the claret is capital; while the bread and the butter are even better. There is a paternal old waiter, who takes a personal

interest in the guests, with a couple of good-humoured female *aides-de-camp*. How I may fare in the further west I do not know, but I mention these agreeable details to show that the tourist in Ireland need not necessarily rough it. In any similar place in the Scotch Highlands there would be three or four great hotels, each and all of them overflowing, with their supercilious landlords spoiled by prosperity. Here half-a-dozen of us have the house to ourselves; we may pick and choose among the bedrooms; and we have only to express a wish to send the establishment scurrying to satisfy it. Nor can anything prove more conclusively how the tourist in Ireland will persistently stick to the beaten tracks. I had to plan for next day an expedition to the coast scenery. It was said to be a dull and dreary drive to the northernmost headland of Malin; it was certainly a very long one; so I decided in preference for Dunree and Dunaff Heads. The decision was wise; for Malin is barely a third of the height of Dunaff, and you may see it from Dunaff without the trouble of going there. As it was, and by changing the route in coming back, I travelled at least thirty Irish miles. But the hog-maned, crop-tailed little Kerry nag did his work well; and the lad who drove was as gentlemanly and intelligent a companion as one could desire to find. To be sure he had a slight dash of superstition. He said the herrings had almost deserted the lough of late years, and I inquired the reason. His explanation was simple if not satisfactory: "Well, sir, some thirty years back they used to be in great plenty, and the people took to fighting over them, so the herrings got disgusted and left the lough."

The morning was heavenly. Each hill and each fishing-boat, each floating cloud and each skimming sea-gull, cast its shadow on "the Lake of Shadows." As we drove to Dunree we passed an abandoned linen mill, and some busy quarries, with a steam stone-breaker, whence Derry draws its principal supplies. Mr Mitchell, who contracts for the quarries, delivers the stone by cart at Buncrana station. There is stone enough in the country. Stones cleared from actual peat-bogs are piled out of the way into broad fences; and stone enclosures checker the sides of the hills, where the grazings are separated into small allotments. Generally speaking, however, the people send their sheep on to the hills in common, each of the many owners having his particular brand. Rocks crop up everywhere through the hill pastures; and at the fort of Dunree, which crossed fire with another fort on the opposite shore, the rocky scenery becomes exceedingly fine. Approaching the heathery fringe of a sheer and lofty precipice, you look along a jagged and rugged shore, where jutting promontories enclose shingly creeks and sandy coves thickly strewn with rounded boulders and sea-weed. It is a regular trade here, the cutting the sea-weed or "leigh" (phonetically spelt) from rocks in the deep water. The crofters keep boats for the purpose; and the weed is fetched away by water, by the farmers whose holdings lie along the shores of the Lough. After turning back from Dunree promontory to the road we had left, we drove forward to the famous Gap of Mamore. The Gap is really a *col* or depression between the hills, to which you climb by an exceedingly sharp ascent. Its beauties, in my opinion, are overrated by the guide-books, though there is a fine scene halfway

down the northern dip, where an amphitheatre of steep and stony hills sinks down to a stagnant pool scarcely rising to the dignity of a tarn. But the day being extraordinarily fine and clear, I climbed the highest of the hills hanging over the Gap to the east, and was richly repaid by the magnificent circular panorama. To the westward I had a bird's-eye view of the geography and hydrography of northern Donegal, with its inland loughs and the intricacies of its sea-arms, with rounded mountain rising behind rounded hill, over the intervening ridges of serrated cliff, each more distant mountain growing dimmer in the faint fine-weather haze. Behind was Lough Swilly winding round to Letterkenny, with a thickly populated belt of cultivation in the foreground; to the south-east lay a wide extent of almost uninhabited moorland; while to the east was the low rocky spit of Malin Head with its lighthouse, running out beyond one of the biggest of the conical hills. After that glorious view, there was something of bathos in the ascent of the round rocky mass of Dunaff, rising to the seaward of the little hamlet of that name, although the rocky mass is 600 feet high. On the top of the rock is a thick layer of peat, and crossing that peaty plateau we look down on the rocks beneath—black buttresses and bastions, with chasms behind them, and the sea churning within these in white-crested surf. To-day everything is so calm that the murmur of the long curving lines of breakers sounds no louder than the rush of a train in the distance. Even against the distant rocks of Malin—a natural breakwater which breaks the full swell of the Atlantic—there is nothing to be seen but an undulating line of white. But one can imagine what the scene and the sounds may

be when a tempest has been lashing the Atlantic into fury.

Returning homewards by an inland and more circuitous road, the drive is dull so far as scenery is concerned. The most striking object is a precipitously rocky island in Malin Bay, apparently impracticable and unapproachable, but which, nevertheless, pastures some forty sheep, which are pitched ashore on a shelf of stone when the weather chances to be propitious. But if the scenery be dull, the people and their habits are interesting—at all events to any one to whom Ireland is unfamiliar. On the whole they seem to be fairly well off, and most of the children are rosy and apparently well fed. There are plenty of roads, and very tolerable roads; plenty of schools and plenty of churches. Certain things in the mode of farming strike a stranger. There are numerous patches of magnificent cabbages, which, with turnips, straw, and occasionally potatoes, feed the cattle through winter. Some of the finest cabbage crops were raised in pure peat, dressed over with natural manure. Elsewhere seedling cabbages are grown in broad borders of peat, divided, like asparagus-beds, by cuttings for drainage, and the seedlings are planted out in the spring. As we drove outward in the morning, few cattle were to be seen. Those which are herded near the houses are turned out early, fetched home at ten, when the cows are milked, and sent out again late in the afternoon with dogs and children in charge; and looking after these light-limbed cows can be no sinecure, seeing that tempting oats and roots are always within a few yards of the scanty herbage they graze upon. They seemed chiefly a small cross between shorthorn and longhorn, with a strong infusion

of an original native breed. They are said to give milk freely, considering their size and their feeding. As for the sheep, the fleeces are sent to the local fairs, where they are bought very much for home spinning and knitting. Here, however, as elsewhere, prices have been falling off sadly: now the average rate is 8d. or 9d. per lb., and the best cleaned fleeces seldom exceed 1s. Hardly a pig was to be seen on the peninsula. I was told that strict police regulations forbid them going at large. *En revanche* there are countless flocks of extremely fine geese, which are bought up by dealers from Glasgow and Liverpool. The butter is generally consigned to Derry. There is a strange absence of wild-animal life. I flushed but a single grouse, though I walked through a great deal of heather. Strange to say, there were no hawks; and I saw nothing in the way of small birds but a few robins and linnets. Magpies were common, and most audaciously tame; while rooks swarm everywhere,—in fact the rooks are an intolerable scourge to the farmer. You may see a band of these gentlemen in black, solemn as so many sextons, digging up a row of potatoes as if they were the legitimate owners. Then they fly away with the tubers to the nearest bare field, where they feast on them at leisure without fear of surprise.

There have been few changes of property of late in Inishowen. In fact, as I shall have frequently occasion to remark, for the last four or five years—since the beginning of the land agitation—the land market has been absolutely paralysed. But just before that agitation a large property, extending from the Minchies Lakes to the market-town of Cardonagh, had been bought by

the Hon. Captain Cochrane, whom I mentioned as residing near Moville. For hill land and fairly fertile strath representing a rental of £2000, he paid about fifteen years' purchase, and, it is to be feared, made a very unfortunate bargain.

With its many attractions, Inishowen can in the meantime hardly be recommended as a sporting district. I have talked to more than one gentleman who had been shooting here, and all had the same tale of disappointment to tell. The shooting has greatly deteriorated in the last few years, chiefly perhaps because the local landowners have been retrenching and getting rid of their keepers. At the best of times it can never have been satisfactory, for the system of small hill farms must be most injurious to it. Each crofter has his dog and a couple of cats or so; and as the cats are kept on the shortest commons, they naturally become indefatigable poachers. Their masters poach too on occasion. One of my informants who knows Scotland well, told me he had never shot over more tempting ground than the moors within a few miles of Buncrana. On the first day's beat he saw one brace of barren birds, with three hares, and he bagged nothing. The second day, under the guidance of a farmer who knew something of sport, he came on a couple of coveys and secured five birds. The proprietor, who was shooting with him, has let some of his land on lease—as he well may—at a merely nominal rent for the next couple of years, the lessees taking it with the idea of preserving and endeavouring to get up the game. It is very certain that with the multitude of squatters and crofters they will have their work cut out for them, more especially as it is impos-

sible to keep down the vermin when so many wastes and moors in the neighbourhood are unpreserved. And even the sea-fishing in the loughs in the last few years has deteriorated like the grouse-shooting. Whether it be owing to the trawling or not, the numbers of the flat-fish —turbot, soles, and plaice—have greatly fallen off. The destruction of the oyster-beds, for which Lough Swilly was once celebrated, dates from a far earlier period. Forty years ago there were beds of "natives" off the Inch Island, whence they used to be literally sent landward by cart-loads, and they sold in the markets of Derry for fourpence per hundred. Now not a native is to be had for love or money. The cause of the destruction is said to have been the reclamation of some 1400 acres of foreshore by a Mr Longstaff and the late Mr Brassey. It is supposed that the encroachment of land on sea may have changed the set of the tides and currents. Subsequently an enterprising local speculator spent upwards of £1000 in an unsuccessful attempt at forming artificial deposits.

I have left the most romantic associations with Inishowen to the last; but it would be impossible to conclude any sketch of the peninsula without a glance at the manufacture of potheen, for which it has always been famous. The illicit business of the hill stills has been decaying like the grouse-shooting and the sea-fishing; but it is still, perhaps, the most important industry north of the linen manufactures of Londonderry. Here, as in northern Donegal and in Antrim, not a few of the peasants have made a hereditary profession of it. With the wild coast-lines, and the innumerable creeks, they can easily land the raw material and ship the manu-

factured article. The clergymen set their faces against it, but they are said still to supply the farmers and the large tradesmen largely. Certain districts come to have a monopoly, because families are born and bred to the business. The children lounging on the hillsides form a *cordon* of keen-eyed watchers round the still, which is set up in some secluded ravine where the smoke is most likely to escape observation. The cost of the apparatus is considerable—some £20 at the lowest—so the profits must be large, since there is always the risk of a surprise and a capture. Formerly the spirit was made entirely of malt. A sack one-third filled was sunk in a stream until the grain had swelled to the size of the sack, then the contents were spread out on the mud-floor of a turf hut till they had sprouted ready for the operation, and the spirit was generally passed three times through the still, till it came out limpid as filtered spring-water. That old-fashioned potheen, though terribly potent, was marvellously pure. Then molasses came to be used in place of the grain; and now, since it is an ill wind that blows nobody good, the fall in the price of sugar has caused it to be successfully substituted for the molasses. The spirit is apparently as pure as before, but the quality is infinitely more deleterious. Such as it is, it fetches good prices at second-hand; the illicit distillers may sell for 8s. or 9s. per gallon, but the retailers demand 14s. or 15s. It is the business of the police in the first place to hunt up the stills; when necessary they may call in the assistance of the coastguard. Cases of detection are comparatively rare; when they do occur they are generally due to information given, presumably out of personal malice. What is remarkable is that some of the most

notorious places of manufacture seem to be an open secret; men in the coastguard will profess to point towards the localities. The difficulty, they say, is to catch the smuggler in the act; the mystery is where and how the distillers conceal their apparatus between times.

II.

DUNFANAGHY, NORTH DONEGAL,
August 22.

I RETRACT nothing I said as to the Lough Swilly Hotel. It is admirable both for civility and comfort. But there were things there that struck me as curiously Irish. The people of the house congratulated themselves on the quiet and the scarcity of company as I congratulated myself. There was never any fish at table, all being despatched to contractors in Derry and none retained. And perhaps most characteristic of all was the behaviour of the zealous boots who had undertaken to awaken me at 7 o'clock sharp. A few minutes after his boisterous entrance, on looking at my watch I found it was 7.45. Expostulating on his not informing me as to a piece of carelessness by which I very nearly missed my steamer, he scratched his head and hesitatingly made answer, "Well, sir, I did not like to say anything, because I thought it might possibly be unpleasant for you. But I was wrong, and I beg you will look over it this time." As if I were in the habit of leaving Lough Swilly every morning! and his manner was so ludicrously insinuating, that it was difficult

to be angry. Everybody, by the way, tags on "Sir" to each sentence as punctiliously as Johnson or Boswell. I crossed the lough by a steam-ferry from Fahan Point to Rathmullet, whence I took a car to Dunfanaghy. There were two or three yachts in the roads at Rathmullet, and three of the vessels of the Channel fleet had just come to an anchor off Buncrana. For a mile or two the road follows the shore of the lough, before turning inland to the market-town of Milford. There are dense woods of ash and of beech on the one hand, on the other were the sands, the shingle, and the sea-weed left bare by the ebbing of the tide. There is fair duck and wild-fowl shooting along this side of Lough Swilly. Some of the people make a regular business of it, and I saw one or two small punts hauled up before the cottages.

We drive nearly all the way to Dunfanaghy, across the great Leitrim estates, which extend from north to south, from far beyond his lordship's residence on the Mulroy river, nearly to Letterkenny at the upper end of the lough. The late earl was murdered, as will be remembered, while driving into Milford from his own house. The murderers have never been brought to justice, though a man charged with the crime died while confined in prison. The present peer is one of the most spirited and philanthropical landlords in the north of Ireland. He has done much to improve the breed of sheep; he has been cutting sheep-drains after the Scotch fashion, and has enclosed great stretches of hill pasture with leagues of wire-fencing. What is still more likely to be productive of good, he has established a regular steam service from his pier at Mulroy to Liverpool and

Glasgow; and there is a smaller steamer which makes irregular trips with produce to various ports along the coast. Driving onwards to Milford, we met many troops of harvestmen from the Dunfanaghy and Gweedore neighbourhoods on their way to Derry to embark for England and Scotland. All of them seemed cheery and in good condition. They had no overcoats, they had no shillelahs; but each man carried under his arm a bundle of his belongings in a red cotton handkerchief. We met, besides, a flock of 200 or 300 geese, likewise on their way to take shipping at Derry. The old gentleman in charge relieved his mind by running back alongside the car to remark that they were "a most conthrairy flock." And, indeed, even the proverbial pig-driving can hardly be such a trial to the temper. The geese waddled aside by the dozen through each gateway and gap; and two or three ragged "gossoons" were galloping on the flanks of the flock like so many collie dogs, hounding them on and heading them back. But even the boys are baffled when the birds take to their wings. Milford is a neat and thriving little town, and I daresay passable quarters might be found there for fishing Lough Fern, which lies a couple of short miles beyond. The boats are kept at the further end of the lough; but the trout are said to be numerous and strong, running as heavy as four or five pounds. Beyond this lough—from Kilmacrenan to Creeslough—the country is singularly bleak, although not altogether devoid of grandeur. There is a rather fine bit in the Gap of Barness, where there is a police hut of wood, with corrugated zinc roof, put up about two years ago. The country was unsettled then, and may any day be unsettled again; in the meantime

it is tolerably peaceable. It is regularly patrolled at night along the different roads and at uncertain intervals — the police from one station meeting those in another by previous arrangement. Their position at the Gap may be excellent from a strategical point of view, but a drearier quarter in the winter it would be difficult to conceive. And from Barness the black mass of Muckish—*Anglicè*, the Hog's Back—is conspicuous,—a very different object from the green Hog's Back near Guildford. Sweeping round a sharp descent from Creeslough towards the sea, the suddenness of the transformation scene is very striking. A streams runs brawling under a picturesque bridge into a widening estuary, whose swelling banks are beautifully wooded; and through the vistas in the hills formed by the estuary there are magnificent views of distant mountains. What is yet more remarkable is an exceedingly extensive model farm-steading, with extremely graceful architectural elevations. Such an oasis in the desert—such lavish expenditure of capital—seems in strange contradiction to the police hut a few miles away, and to the ordinarily unsettled condition of the district. We are on the estate of Mr Stewart of Ards,—a deservedly popular landlord, whose lands "march" with those of Lord Leitrim. Like his lordship, he has done much for the sheep and cattle; he has led an ample supply of water into Dunfanaghy; he has gifted it with a small Court-house; and his outlay for many years must have been enormous. It may suffice to say that for miles along the road runs a solid wall of massive masonry, ranging from six feet to eight feet in height. Now the expenditure has been stopped; the property has passed

into the hands of trustees, and a sad loss it must be to the neighbourhood.

Dunfanaghy is a large village or small town, consisting of a single long, wide, steep street. The inn is homely, but clean and comfortable, and the people are civility itself. So far as my short experiences go, the Irish at first distrust the English stranger, and their greeting is cautious if not forbidding. Let them once understand that you are willing to be pleased, and they will spare no trouble to satisfy you. As for the dinner to-day, I should be sorry to swear that the chicken had not been foraging in the street this morning; but the bacon and beans would have been a feature at a Greenwich banquet, and they were backed up by a capital pudding; while, again, I was agreeably surprised in the claret I recklessly ordered. The attraction of Dunfanaghy is the stupendous rock scenery. It is three long Irish miles to Horn Head, but a car may be taken for two-thirds of the way. From the end of the driving road is a rough walk over heather and peat-bog to a modern ruin on the verge of the headland. Doubtless a boat from below would be the best way of seeing the cliffs; yet, as seen from above, in my opinion, they surpass anything I have admired either in Cornwall or Brittany. Standing under the dilapidated tower, you look across to a sheer precipice of grey splintered rock, some 630 feet in depth. The sea-gulls circling over the sea seemed dwarfed to white swallows; and the view immediately beneath one's feet was as fine, though, owing to the slight slope of the slippery turf, it was rather giddy work looking over. The description of such panoramic sea views becomes monotonous; but

this one was more impressive than anything in Inishowen, because there were no adjacent eminences to intercept the distant prospects. It was towards sunset; again the day was beautifully clear and the ocean calm as glass, and to seaward the eye ranged over the promontories and sea-lochs from Malin Head to the Bloody Foreland, the north-westerly point of Ireland. Except in the remote distance, there was not a habitation to be seen, and the sense of solitude must have been oppressive had the weather been more gloomy. Here and there rose mountains of magnificently striking shapes, the most remarkable being the snow-white peak, or rather pyramid, of Errigal, which rears his head high above all the rest in the district of Gweedore. I did not visit M'Sweeny's Gun, a monster piece of ordnance, with touch-hole opening on the cliff above, where the rush of the ocean is said to make a report which is to be heard in the storm as far as Derry. *Credat Judæus!* In other words, the "Gun" is a great cavern ending beneath a circular perforation, like the Bullers of Buchan on the coast of Aberdeen, where the billows of the Atlantic, when pent up in rough weather, toss blocks and boulders to an inconceivable height.

The population of Ireland is, perhaps, the most mixed in the world. Dane, Norman, Welshman, Englishman, German, and Frenchman, have successively intermingled their blood with that of the aboriginal Celt. But in eastern Donegal the Scot appears to predominate, till he shades away into the hereditary seats of the natives in the wild bogs to the westward of Dunfanaghy. Judging by the names, the well-to-do farmers who own the carts you meet are of pure Scottish descent; the landowners

beyond such great properties as that of the Leitrim estates are chiefly Stewarts and Hamiltons. Even at Dunfanaghy, which is literally almost at the back of the world, I was astonished to find that the Episcopalian clergyman had upwards of 600 parishioners. What is still more surprising is, that since the disestablishment of the Irish Church, a handsome church and rectory house have been erected. Formerly the Dunfanaghy Episcopalians had to walk five or six miles to service — now the service has been brought to their doors. Some of the money was raised in England by their pastor, the Rev. Mr Brodie, who is himself an Englishman; and Mr Stewart of Ards contributed liberally, giving a site and £300, with £1000 towards the endowment of the living. But even the poorest people gave according to their means, though the life-blood of the Irish Episcopalian Church in these parts is being steadily drained away. Emigration has been going briskly forward of late years, and the emigrants have been of two classes. There were the absolutely destitute, who of course received free passages; and there were those who are decidedly better off, and sufficiently intelligent to see that emigration would improve their condition. Most of these last were either Episcopalians or Presbyterians, and so the clergymen lose the most affluent members of their congregations, if it be not an absurdity to speak of affluence in West Donegal. The 5s. and the 10s. they contributed are much missed when it comes to making up the £104 for which the parish is rated by the Church Commissioners. And should arrears accumulate to a certain point, the defaulting parish is merged in another. On the one hand,

it is sincerely to be hoped that the emigration will go on; but, on the other, it must have a serious effect on those local sustentation funds, as to which, in any case, much must depend on the presence of a rich and liberal landowner. Talking of emigration, I am told that a year or two ago nearly a hundred of the inhabitants of Dunfanaghy left in one day. I need hardly say that they could well be spared, and those who remain in the dead-alive little place appear to take life very easily. There was one small sloop unloading in the little harbour; there were policemen off duty lounging about or sitting and sunning themselves on the window-sills; there were people with their hands in their pockets, lounging and looking on at the policemen; while others who had strolled as far as the bluffs behind the houses were lounging and looking out to sea. If they seemed listless and idle, they are hardly to be blamed. Most of them live, or rather starve, by fishing, having neither crofts nor hill grazing,—strange to say, because their fishing appliances are miserable, and they have no market for any fish they do take. There are plenty of fish, as is proved by the hauls of a gentleman who occasionally trawls off the shore in his steam yacht. There is no interference, as further to the south, by foreigners in the shape of either Englishmen or Frenchmen. But the Dunfanaghy men have only their primitive coracles, shaped something like small salmon cobbles, and made of tarred canvas stretched over hoops of wood. The oars in size and shape resemble the long narrow-bladed halberds carried by medieval men-at-arms, the blades having generally been broken, and lashed together again with twine. In such frail

fabrics the fishermen, though daring enough, cannot possibly venture any distance from the land, especially on that storm-beaten coast. Accordingly they catch little, and what they do catch they can only sell to a few residents in the neighbourhood—the clergymen or the small landowners. Any touching little attempt at speculation is a pitiful failure. Only a few weeks ago, for example, some of the poor fellows made up a consignment of magnificent lobsters, and clubbed to send them over to Liverpool. Every one of the lobsters died *en route*, and the men, to whom each penny is of consequence, were out of pocket for the freight they paid in advance. Anything more discouraging to enterprise can hardly be conceived. And here, in this forgotten corner of the kingdom, nature seems to set herself against helping the people. It would be much to improve the harbour so as to facilitate occasional steam communication; but there is an ugly and very dangerous sand-bar, over which the sea tumbles in the calmest weather in an unpleasantly suggestive fashion; while any vessel lying in the open roadstead would find it hard to hold her moorings in a strong north-westerly gale. The force of these north-westerly gales must be tremendous; and it struck me that before the low doorway of the meanest hovel in the district, a tall broad slab of stone is set up by way of shelter. Where all the land that is not bog is stone, such slabs are, perhaps, the only luxury the poorest can indulge in. A Mr Stewart—not the proprietor of Ards—works a valuable salmon-fishery at the back of Horn Head. As the fishing only begins in the spring, the stake-nets can usually be visited in comparative safety, though, naturally, in wild weather no boat

dare venture round the Head. The fish, when not consigned to some chance steamer, are driven in carts over the twenty miles to Rathmullet. There has been a rough preliminary survey of a proposed railway from Letterkenny to Dunfanaghy. The line would present no great difficulties, the land is worth little, and would be given by the landowners for less. The fatal objection is, that it could not pay by any possibility. By way of postscript, I may mention an example of the injurious effect of the want of communications on markets. I saw half-a-dozen fine sheep which had been bought the other day for 15s. a-head. At any English fair they must certainly have fetched twice the money. And as an exceptional instance of the energy which might be more generally lucrative, I was told of a very young man who had invested some years' savings in a score or so of sheep, which he had sold for nearly cent per cent in Scotland. It is an unfortunate thing for Ireland that such instances of energy are phenomenal.

III.

GWEEDORE, NORTH DONEGAL,
August 25.

THE Gweedore Hotel had a high reputation during the lifetime of the late Lord George Hill, who built it and looked after it personally. It is still extremely popular, and a tolerably comfortable place of sojourn, considering the outlandish situation. But one must be prepared to put up with certain drawbacks which we should grumble at in a house of similar pretensions in England. For it is a spacious mansion of a couple of storeys, with an ample coffee-room, sundry private sitting-rooms, and a great number of bedrooms. Unlike the hotel at Buncrana, it is always full to overflowing, most visitors making a sojourn of some days at the least; and though the accommodation is made wonderfully elastic, people are perpetually being turned away from the door, which means a drive of twelve miles to Dunglow in the one direction, or of half as many more to Dunfanaghy in the other. It is a thorough fishing and shooting establishment. Everything except the table, where there never were any fish, is suggestive of fishing, from the salmon that surmounts

the weathercock to the rods by the half-dozen hung on hooks beneath the leaden gutters, and landing-nets by the armful leaning against the corners of the verandah. At this moment half the rooms are appropriated to an overgrown shooting-party, numbering fifteen with ladies and children; and "the balance," as the Americans would say, are in possession of various anglers. We live in good fellowship, but in happy-go-lucky fashion. We racket along the passages till all hours of the night. Our watches differ widely as to hours, and we lose all notion of the value of time. The fare, when it comes, is good and plentiful; but we have to practise patience in waiting for it. Exciting one's self does not facilitate matters, and only injures the digestion. The shooting here would be thought miserably poor in Scotland, but it is far better than what I described in Inishowen. Four guns, for example, had twenty-five brace of birds on their best day, and a few days after the beginning of the season they brought home a mixed bag of forty-five head, including eight brace of grouse, the rest being hares, duck, teal, plover, and curlew. As for the fishing, it has been poor also; but this, owing to the unusual drought, has been a singularly unsatisfactory fishing season. Here, as elsewhere in western Ireland, the best water is let and strictly preserved. To show what may be done in these parts, I may mention that Mr Lee, who has the best two miles of the Clada, which flows in front of the hotel, some years ago killed sixty-five salmon in five days. Since that time the fishing has fallen off, although now it begins to improve again. In the height of the land agitation the hotel and the lessee of the water were boycotted. No gillies or watchers

could be procured for love or money, and the peasants could poach at their goodwill and pleasure. But the Clada, with its alternations of pools and swift rushes, ought naturally to be a beautiful stretch of salmon water. There are small lakes above, free to anglers from the hotel, boat and boatman being charged 4s. 6d., where a fair lot of small trout, averaging half a pound, but giving good sport, may be killed; while within the last week or two the sea-trout have been beginning to run here, finding their way, as is their habit, from the sea to the upper loughs. Dunglow, twelve miles to the southward, is said to be excellent quarters for the "white trout" fishing, as the river connects a chain of loughs which are favourite resorts of the fish.

I have been somewhat disappointed in the situation of the Gweedore Hotel, having perhaps heard too much of it beforehand. The bogs and low hills about it are tame, and the only walks in the immediate neighbourhood are up or down a car-road; for these Irish bogs, unlike the elastic Scotch heather, are fatiguing and most untempting walking. But the isolated peak of Errigal is always a magnificent object; there are grand precipices at the back of the Bloody Foreland, and the nearest coast, which is four miles distant, is a scene of most impressive desolation. But scenery apart, Gweedore is well deserving of a visit by any one interested in the Irish land question; for it was here that Lord George Hill, chivalrously attempting the impossible, tried to turn a desert in the direction of a paradise, and to spread the comforts of civilised life among a population phenomenally wretched and overcrowded. His lordship, no doubt, did much good; but though the

experiment promised fairly for a time, it can hardly be said to have succeeded, seeing the present state of the district. But its history is none the less curious and interesting. Briefly, in 1835 he bought 23,000 acres from various small proprietors. The parish then contained 9000 souls; their condition was abject in the extreme. A memorial, sent about that time by the schoolmaster to the Lord-Lieutenant, describes the people as "naked and needy" beyond anything within the memorialist's knowledge. He says that among the whole of them there were but one plough, twenty shovels, thirty-two rakes, and two feather-beds; and he offers to give any visitor ocular demonstration of the facts. Many of the children went naked through the winter; the adults wore the filthiest rags. Lord George bought the land with his eyes open and from motives purely philanthropic. He said himself that he knew things were the result of the vicious system which had prevailed for ages, and he set himself to grapple with it patiently and resolutely. The initial difficulty was to persuade the people that he meant well by them. They distrusted a landlord and all he did. The next thing was to overcome their prejudices as to cultivation, to change the miserable system of "rundale," and to redistribute the tiny crofts. With great outlay and by incredible efforts he gradually taught the peasants to believe in him, to accept his wages, and undertake his work. When they saw the superiority of the crops he raised they began gradually to imitate him. He opened a shop and meal-stores at Gweedore Station. He offered premiums for cottages; he actually established flower-shows and exhibitions of work. And undoubtedly his enterprising

benevolence has had lasting effects, and he must have done much to improve the tone of the district.

Under Captain Hill, the present proprietor, the tenants, as I have every reason to believe, were fairly and even liberally treated. But when the land agitation seized on the weakest points of the Irish land system, north-western Donegal was naturally pitched upon. Hopelessly overcrowded still, after very considerable emigration, it is simply unfit for human habitation, unless on wages regularly paid. Driving from Dunfanaghy, or even from Creeslough to Gweedore, I have no hesitation in saying that, in the real interests of humanity, a clean sweep should be made of the crofters, and the land given over, as in the Scotch Highlands, to sheep and game. Then a certain number of shepherds and gillies could bring up their families in comfort; while there might be fishermen along the coast, if markets could be opened up to them. Look at the present situation of this great parish of Gweedore. It extends for ten Irish miles from the Bloody Foreland southward—I ought to have said that four Irish miles are equal to five English—and for nearly the same distance from Errigal to the sea. Besides, there are one or two thickly populated islands off Gweedore Bay, the only land, except the reefs called the Stags of Arranmore, between Gweedore and the State of New York. The general aspect is that of barren bog, checkered by patches of oats and potatoes. Within the limits of the dreary waste are still 3000 souls. Captain Hill owns the lion's share; there are two or three smaller proprietors; and Lord Leitrim has a patch of land below Errigal. On Captain Hill's estate there are not half-a-dozen tenants who pay the

£4 of rent which renders them liable to rating. All the rest are practically paupers, their average rents being under £1, many being as low as 10s. Most of them have a cow or two, and some sheep; but not a few nowadays do not even own the pig which the cottier used always to look to for his rent. The land, which it is irony to call arable, is either stone or bog. The stony soil carries a straggling crop; but the reclaimed bog is hungry beyond all conception. The spongy peat, which must be freely manured at first, sucks down the manure, and sooner or later ceases to repay cultivation. The labour that should be economised is still wasted by the absurd practice of "rundale," which seems to have survived Lord G. Hill's reforms. Thanks to the congestion and the perpetual land-hunger, each tenant bought the tenant-right of a patch at outrageous prices where he could get it. There are no fences; the extents of the holdings are roughly defined as a "cow's grass" or a "sheep's grass"; so people must be continually told off to herd the beasts, and the quarrels and the feuds between neighbours are incessant. That there are no markets is of the less consequence here, since the people consume the produce, which is far from sufficing for them. They still live chiefly on potatoes; and the potatoes, being planted late, are dug before they come to maturity. They are either soft and spongy, or small and waxy. The oats may ripen or they may not. The people who have cows use their milk; when they have attempted to make butter it was so bad that no one would buy it. But a good many have no cows, or the cows go off milk for a time, and then they must be content to drink water. Here,

as in Scotland, they have fallen back a good deal on Indian meal, and I shall explain presently how they come by it.

It is clear, therefore, that the people must starve under the most favourable circumstances if they depend solely on their crops, and they must supplement their poor resources by labour. But practically there is no labour to be had near their homes. All the proprietors are non-resident: there is no middle class, there are no wealthy farmers. The men must raise money as they may to go in search of labour to Scotland. One third of the able-bodied males in Gweedore start each summer to reap the Scotch fields. Happily for them, emigration has been thinning their ranks; for the demand for their scythes has been steadily diminishing, owing to the introduction of machinery. As yet, however, it is the harvesting—which must fail them in time—that they count upon to pay their way. The stock of potatoes and oats does not suffice to nourish their families during their absence, so they buy Indian meal on credit. Among his other works of beneficence, Lord George Hill built a mill and grain stores at Gweedore harbour; and the miller now has regular deliveries by steamer of meal, which he retails to his customers. I do not understand that his charges are excessive; but as he sells on trust, and though his debtors usually deal honestly by him, he occasionally makes bad debts, and is justified in calculating for a considerable profit;—so that the harvest wages are nearly half anticipated, while what remains is more than exhausted for winter food and for clothes. Where the rent comes from is a mystery; and, indeed, every one to whom I have spoken agrees that it would be diffi-

cult to get a living in Gweedore if the land were given the people for nothing.

In other words, they live at the best of times from hand to mouth, trusting to the chapter of accidents to save them from tumbling into the gulf—the brink of which they are perpetually treading. Of late, with the exception of the famine year, things have been comparatively in their favour—the seasons here having been tolerably good, and there having been no potato disease to speak of. Reports vary as to "the famine" of 1879, though it seems certain that the distress was exaggerated. But at any time a failure of the potato crop might create a veritable dearth; and there are few men in the district who have a shilling of savings to fall back upon. Rents may be cut down in the Land Courts; but when it is as hard to screw out a shilling as a pound, neither tenant nor landlord gains by the reduction. Arrears will accumulate just as before. I repeat that the only radical remedy would be to sweep such a country clear of paupers, and turn the ground to its natural uses. I admit that the remedy is a cruel one; but it is like the sharp surgical operation which will save the sufferer. No people are more attached to their homes and holdings than the Irish; no people more heartily detest the idea of going into the poorhouse; and it is very natural. Brought up from babyhood in the freedom of their open bogs, cherishing their domestic affections even in a hovel, the confinement and separation of the workhouse are intolerable to them. Hence the fervour with which the question of outdoor relief was pressed and resisted. Once admitted, its extension would have been unlimited, and the landowners and small ratepayers would have

been crushed under the burden of the rates, which has to be borne at best by a handful of contributories. So sad is the state of things that famines may be blessings in disguise, since they force the starving poor to choose between the poorhouse and emigration. When they elect for the latter, they not only benefit themselves, but are the cause of substantial benefits to those they leave behind. Many of the recent emigrants from Gweedore to America have assisted young relations to follow them, and many more are most creditably regular in their remittances to the poor old parents they have left struggling behind.

Yet, though the improvement depends chiefly on circumstances beyond their control, during the last eight years there has been decided improvement. The hovels have been whitewashed, the open cesspools and the dunghills before the doors have been disappearing; and above all, the priest—no less a person than the Rev. Mr M'Fadden, whose name has been so widely associated with the local land agitation—has been assiduously preaching temperance with very visible results. The illicit stills which did so much formerly to demoralise the district are said to have vanished altogether, and the people have taken to drinking bad tea, when they can afford it, instead of fiery whisky. They dress somewhat better than they used to do; and I was struck on Sunday by seeing so many of the women wearing clean and gaudy tartan shawls. After all, however, it must be remembered that the improvement is only relative. The interiors of the hovels, which have been brightened outside by whitewash, are miserable in the extreme. There is nothing that can be called furniture; the bed-

clothing is wretched; the animals, where any are kept, live in one end of the cabin. I may mention, by the way, that in a decent-looking two-storeyed inn halfway between this place and Dunfanaghy, with a bar well stocked with bottles of Bass and Guinness, I found a couple of fine broods of chickens pecking about the floor of "the parlour"; while there, too, the pig resided in the mansion, though, the day being fine and the doors open, at the time of my visit he had gone out for a stroll. The people weave frieze or flannel for their own use, but the only industry in the parish may be said to be the knitting of stockings. There are quarries of granite understood to be valuable—once worked for a short time and since abandoned; but there are no facilities in the harbour for shipping the stones. There are only two *bonâ fide* fishermen along the long coast and on the islands; and one of these men, who had a boat and nets given him, has beached the boat and left his nets to rot. For, in fact, nothing is more difficult than to help those people who will insist on being helped in their own way.

The district suffered severely in the famine of 1879, receiving, however, no less than £2000 from the charitable funds. And, as will be remembered, there were serious disturbances during the land agitation. The priest organised the tenantry, who had formerly hesitated to press their grievances, in a regular strike for the reduction of rents. Some of them, but not many, went the length of demanding free land. The landlord declined the terms the majority would have dictated; and indeed, unless he was prepared to resign his rights altogether, it seems to me that he had no option but to resist. In point of fact, from a pecuniary point of view, he might have done better had he compounded and

given up the 4s. in the pound that was asked. The tenants went in two lots into the Land Courts, which granted two sweeping reductions of from 25 to 35 per cent. Against the first of these decisions the landlord has appealed, on the understanding that till the appeal is disposed of no disturbance shall take place. They tell me that should the Land Court decisions be made the standard of reduction all over the estate, it is probable that the rents due in November will be fairly met. During the agitation there were some awkward encounters between the people and the police. The assistance of the military was called in, and a company of the 15th Regiment was quartered in the Union of Dunfanaghy. A gentleman gave me a vivid description of a body of fifteen police he had seen retiring in deplorable plight from one of these "scrimmages." The Land-Leaguers had been pelting them with stones from behind a movable bulwark of women, and the policemen gallantly withdrew rather than send a volley of ball among the ladies. Although there have been no evictions on Captain Hill's estates, there were many during last month on the estates of the smaller proprietors. Eighty families were turned out. Opinions vary as to the wisdom or justice of the measure, and I am not prepared to pronounce on it. I am informed that Captain Peel, the stipendiary magistrate, an Englishman, and likely to be an impartial judge, gave it as his opinion, that the poorest of the evicted people had actually nothing to pay with. Had the people been left in the workhouse they must have been supported by the rates. Probably the landlords really desired to get rid of them; and it may be gathered from what I have said that I am inclined to believe that such

apparent harshness, whatever be its motive, may sometimes be veritable kindness. In these cases, however, about £150 was collected through the efforts of the priest. Compositions were made; the landlords did get a little money, and many of the tenants came back as caretakers. The case may form an awkward precedent for the people if it induces other landlords to evict. That I may not be misunderstood, I repeat that I by no means underrate the suffering caused by eviction, nor do I deny that it is a hard and painful remedy, only to be justified by a desperate state of things. The actual suffering is often very great; the wrench to the domestic and local affections must always be intensely painful. As the Irish detest the workhouse, so they dread the sea. If evictions are to be made, everything should be done to alleviate the inevitable hardships. In Gweedore, I am informed that the aged, the infirm, and the children of these eighty families passed a whole week shelterless in the open air before carts were provided to convey them to Dunfanaghy. Pending further emigration or clearances, humanely conducted, the only thing to be done is to apply palliatives. It would be much to save the harvesters from the necessity of supporting their families on credit during their long absences; though it would obviously be difficult to prevent any system of advances from being abused. Something might be arranged, however, through the agency of the priest and Mr Clason, the Episcopalian clergyman, who nowadays seem to work amicably together; while small public works might be undertaken, in the way of providing a pier, or at least a slip, which might make it possible to develop the quarries and perhaps the fishing.

IV.

KILLYBEGS, SOUTH DONEGAL,
August 29.

THE riches of Ireland are in the soil, the seas, and the scenery, though the less said of the soil of Donegal the better. With the exceptions I have already noticed, the scenery has been neglected like the seas, at least so far as English and American visitors are concerned. I have seen nothing sterner nor grander than these rocky headlands of Donegal, lashed in stormy weather by the wild surf of the Atlantic. Yet, after making the tour of the county, though I have fallen in with a few English fishermen, I have not met a single English tourist. The two best hotels in the north-west are filled to overflowing; but they are filled with Irish, people who often come for a stay of some weeks, and generally either for shooting or angling. The Irish, unfortunate in that as in other things, have been unlucky in having had no mighty magician to bring gold out of the rocks by the wand of the enchanter. It is curious to speculate as to what might have happened had Walter Scott been born an Irishman. He would have been as little at a loss here for subjects as for scenery. These Donegal high-

lands abound in legends of blessed saints and patriotic heroes. There are holy wells and the sites of sacred hermitages, ruined abbeys and shattered keeps. Hardly a ford in any of the mountain streams but has run red with Saxon and Celtic blood, and, in fact, over all the district generally has been battle and murder and sudden death. There were native warriors of the blood of the O'Donnels and O'Neills who had sufficiently stirring and romantic careers. Some of them before they headed their hordes of wild gallow-glasses at home in unavailing resistance to the Saxon invasion, had served in the armies of the Emperor Charles; and one, who died on a mission to his son Philip, was buried with pompous ceremonial in the Cathedral of Valladolid. Surely there are materials in stories like these for any number of "Lays" and "Ladies of the Lake"; while the voyage among the rocky islands and round the iron-bound coasts of Donegal would be wilder, both in subjects and incidents, than the cruise of the Bruce in the "Lord of the Isles." Unhappily Ireland has had no Scott to lay the foundations of handsome hotels and establish comfortable posting, to put steamers on the lakes, and throw steam ferries across the estuaries. Tom Moore was content to warble his "Melodies" in drawing-rooms, and to celebrate the sweetness of the meeting of the waters in the soft vale of Avoca. Carleton and Lover, Lever and Maxwell, while their descriptions and their "traits of the peasantry" may be read with interest and pleasure, never rose nearly to the heights of the inspiration that captivates cosmopolitan imagination. The real regenerator of West Ireland is still to come, but in the meantime plain and prosaic statements may do something to prepare the way for him.

I may say then, in the first place, that the discomforts of travelling in Donegal have been strangely overrated. Things may have greatly changed in the last few years; but apparently there must have been a remarkable improvement since the latest edition of "Murray" was published in 1878. The writer tells us, for example, that there is "but one poor little hotel between Gweedore and Carrick—a long day's drive." I have just driven over that route, and did not stop at the hotel at Glenties, which I believe to be considered the best. But I passed the night at Dunglow, where I had an excellent bed, and as good a simple dinner as I have ever sat down to, served in a snug and well-furnished private sitting-room. At Ardara, where I stopped for lunch next day, I was shown into a room newly decorated, with a handsome glass over the chimneypiece, and good engravings on the walls, with tables strewed with books, and a set of well-stuffed dining-room chairs covered with gorgeous velvet. As for creature comforts, nowhere in England have I drunk more admirable draught pale ale. And, having been compelled to pass the well-known hotel at Carrick, as to which I shall have something to say in another letter, I drove on to seek quarters here at Killybegs with very considerable misgivings. But now I am writing in a bright sitting-room, the windows commanding an enchanting view of the little bay; with tables, arm-chairs, sofa, piano, &c., and, moreover, a "well-selected library," containing, among others, works by Richardson, Washington Irving, Pope, Hook, &c. I make no apology for going into these details, since they will bring home to my countrymen, misinformed as I was myself, what they may reasonably expect in Donegal.

Everywhere I have been received with the civility and eagerness to oblige which are too often conspicuous by their absence in fashionable English hotels; but what has surprised me more is the extreme cleanliness. I speak of things as I have found them; and I may almost invariably speak of well-swept and well-dusted rooms, of snowy sheets, table-cloths, and even napkins. Only once have I had to dispense with the morning bath, and that was not in one of the smaller inns. In more than one are regular bath-rooms. Indeed, the only fault to be found is a want of method and punctuality. It is always as well to order a meal at least a quarter of an hour before you hope to sit down to it.

That is, however, of the less consequence that there are no trains to be caught, which leads me to speak of communications generally, and of the Irish cars and their drivers. There is no lack of roads, and for the most part they are fairly good, though often extremely hilly. The car is on the whole excellently suited to them, and undoubtedly Bianconi, who introduced them, is one of the greatest benefactors of Ireland. Had the Irish been more punctilious in paying their debts, the Italian would have had his statue in every market-town. I may remark in passing that he was originally a picture-dealer in Clonmel, who, having seen the possibility of a fortune in the improvement of the communications, started the first of the cars from Clonmel to Cahir in the "Waterloo year." Queer stories are told of how he pushed his enterprise, particularly by getting up fictitious competition. The competition was carried rather far, when one of his drivers burst triumphantly into his office one day, begging half-a-crown of his honour to

drink his honour's health, since "he had just bruck the heart of the brown mare" in the opposition conveyance by pushing her hard up the hill of so-and-so, the mare being, of course, Bianconi's own. The car, I repeat, is well adapted to the country: it is generally to be obtained on a few minutes' notice, and the drivers, in default of relays, will take their passenger incredible distances. The man who drove me yesterday from Dunglow brought me on to Ardara from Glenties, where we had failed to find a change. I expressed a fear that I might be "planted" at Ardara should we be equally unfortunate there. "Sure, sir," said my friend, "and sooner than ye shall be bate, I'll rowl ye on to Carrick myself, aye, and to Killybegs to the back of that."

I may remark that the hills in some places were tremendous, and that with three changes I took eleven hours to cover the distance of which my friend spoke so lightly. Yet the Irish car has its obvious drawbacks. It shakes you even with tolerable springs on the smoothest roads, and where the roads are rough the jolting is terrible. It exposes one to the wind and the weather, though much may be gained by sitting on the lee side. And, although seated either for four or six besides the driver, it will hardly carry more than two people with comfort if they have any quantity of luggage. When two share the expenses of a private car, they are cheap enough. I have found the ordinary charge for posting to be 8d. per Irish mile; while the drivers seem generally to expect the other 4d. Indeed they make themselves so agreeable that, though the "tip" seems high, it is difficult to grudge it them. But the traveller in search of facts must be on his guard

with his agreeable and voluble companion. It is not so much that the man has any deliberate intention to deceive, still less that he is trying to "take a rise out of the foreigner." As yet I have seen no signs of the Irish exuberance of sprits of which we used to hear so much, and any samples of native humour I have met have been unconscious. But if he sees you are inquisitive and anxious to be informed, he will supply false information rather than none at all, and that with such an air of veracity and appearance of circumstantiality that at first it is difficult not to be taken in. I remarked that odd bit of idiosyncrasy with the waiters and club porters in Dublin, who contradicted themselves unblushingly as to the movements of members of which in reality they knew nothing whatever. I listened to a pathetic tale of eviction from a car-driver, who acted the scenes of ejection dramatically, with innumerable flourishes of his whip, pointing towards the very glens where he said they had happened. In reality, the evictions he must have alluded to had occurred forty miles away, and in an exactly opposite direction. On the other hand, the driver will be found generally reliable in ordinary local matters; and I flatter myself it soon becomes possible to draw the line of the probable limits of his flights of fancy. As for the public mail cars, their pace is better than that of the others; and the charges are extremely low. When I tried one of them the other day, I travelled over twenty English miles for 2s. 6d.; but the chances are that the start is at an awkward hour—you may have to start unpleasantly early, or to arrive inconveniently late. And as they may be packed with passengers, and as they stow away any quantity of

packages, the cost price of the journey may be dear at any money. When I travelled I chanced to have the conveyance to myself; and even then I had some difficulty in dodging the eccentric evolutions of an enormous parcel-post sack, stuffed to the mouth with sharp-cornered boxes and angular parcels. In connection with the jolting of these cars and with the soaking rain which chronically drenches the cushions, I may mention an appliance which will be of great comfort to travellers, and may sometimes save them from serious colds. The way I came by a knowledge of it was characteristic of Irish kindness. Travelling from Dublin to the north, I made the acquaintance of a gentleman, who in the course of conversation showed me an invention of his own. It was simply a small square cushion of corrugated india-rubber, and so portable that it might be rolled around an umbrella. Necessarily it is absolutely impervious to damp; and even in dry weather, placed under the cushion of the car, it wonderfully breaks the jolting. Seeing that I was interested and appreciated it, and hearing I was bound for the west, my companion insisted on forcing his own cushion on a total stranger. I am glad at once to repay his good-nature and do no inconsiderable service to Irish tourists, by mentioning that, according to a pamphlet I borrowed from him, the patentee of the cushion is Mr Gaussen; and that, with many similar adaptations of the same material, it may be had of Messrs Warne, of 29 Gresham Street.

I shall only say, in conclusion, that though the car must always remain the vehicle of the country, much might be done towards encouraging tourists by starting public brakes on some of the main roads. The brakes

would be infinitely more convenient for ladies, and for men who shrink from fatigue or fear exposure. They might run, to begin with, two or three days in the week, as the present traffic would hardly suffice to fill them daily. And for spirited proprietors who could advertise such facilities, there is certainly an opening for additional hotels. Those at Gweedore and Carrick, which have long been celebrated, are always overcrowded throughout the season, rooms are frequently engaged for weeks beforehand, and travellers are daily turned away from the doors with no other place of refuge within many miles; while each new hotel would be a new centre of civilisation, and of no small benefit to the surrounding poor.

V.

KILLYBEGS, *September* 1.

FROM the Gweedore Hotel to Dunglow is a dreary drive; and the same may be said of the long road to Carrick, though here and there is a fine view of a striking bit of savage landscape. Besides Errigal, which we leave behind, and the mass of Slieve Liagh which looms before us, imposing hills often skirt the horizon. Now and again we get bright glimpses to seaward, or we look down upon the heads of the wild glens leading towards the fertile lowlands of Londonderry. But all around are low bare swells or stretches of flat peat-bog, and the coarse and struggling rushes and grasses are rarely brightened by heather bloom. Now and again we are cheered by the sight of a patch of the purple loosestrife, which grows almost everywhere in profusion from Lough Swilly to the Bay of Donegal. The great excitement of the road is the barking of the curs—mongrels of all shapes, sizes, and colours—which will come any distance to bark at the car, following till they pass it on to some of their fellows. To get up any head of game under such conditions must be a sheer impossibility, though the dwellings and the dogs become fewer

and farther between as the green corn patches fade away into uncultivable mountain. Dunglow, like so many of these Donegal villages, consists of a single steep and straggling street, with tilted carts and heaps of peat along the sides of the rugged causeway. It must be as dreary a sojourn as can be imagined in winter or in wet weather; nevertheless, it is a favourite resort of anglers, which may account for the comforts of the inn. The fishings, which belong to the Marquis of Conyngham,—his "country" begins some eight miles to the north, and extends southward very nearly to Ardara,—are rented for several miles by Captain Montgomery Stewart and Mr Herdman. There is a network of rushy lakes, said to number upwards of eighty—many of them linked together by the river—and into them the sea-trout, as I have said, are running up at this season. The fishing is open to anglers; but as there are only eight boats the sport is so far limited, for there is little to be done from the banks. The charge is 10s. per week, with 5s. besides for boat and boatman. Arrangements are made by the head-keeper, who assigns the lochs and the stations according to priority of application. It was an indifferent fishing-day when I stopped at Dunglow, yet a gentleman with whom I dined had killed five good sea-trout and a dozen or so of the small brown loch-trout. Comparatively dry here, as everywhere else, this has hitherto been an unfavourable angling season in Donegal. It is amusing to ask the hangers-on of the hotels as to the prospects of the weather. They look you over to decide whether you are angler or tourist, and then make answer accordingly. As I am travelling with rods, though I desire sunshine, the prophets and I have been at cross

purposes, and they invariably promise me "soft" weather. There is sea-fishing also to be had from Dunglow, and occasionally a little seal-shooting along the shores of the bay. The peasant women do a good deal of knitting. Next door to the inn is a woollen store, with piles of coloured worsteds on the shelves to the one side and heaps of socks and stockings encumbering the other. The people give out the materials, paying 2½d. for the knitting of each pair of socks, which they are ready to retail at 1s. 6d. per pair. I am told that a woman can knit a pair per day; but all the young girls are brought up to assist, so that the pay, small as it may appear, must make a considerable difference to the family comforts.

From the village the road winds among the lakes, with their innumerable rocks and stones jutting out of them, and with small islands densely covered with the bog-alder. These islands are the haunts of the ducks and the herons that nest there, and are forced to put up with villanous company. For here, strange to say, for the first time, I have seen considerable numbers of the hooded crows, who also breed in those thickets of alder. The herons, fishing in the pools or floating over the peat-bogs, were graceful objects all along the way. And something was needed to brighten up the landscape, which was as depressing as the dismal day. Brown clouds lay low on the grey hills and black bogs, while the efforts at cultivation were as deplorable as anything in Gweedore. The tenants of the Marquis have lately received a reduction of 25 per cent on their rents, which may be so much the better for them, although here, as at Gweedore, it would seem difficult

to live on any terms. At the same time, wherever Nature was somewhat more kindly, there were signs that the management of the estates is liberal. It was pleasant, at a sharp turn down hill, to descend to some comfortable houses near a picturesque bridge over the Gweebarra river, where there are valuable salmon-fisheries and thriving crops. The little girls going to the national school had nicely dressed hair, and wore clean white pinafores; and, to my astonishment, I actually saw two or three in frocks of neat brown holland, embroidered with scarlet. At Glenties, too, there were good houses, and even some rather handsome residences of clergymen, land agents, &c., in trim plantations; but in the Rosses, here any prosperity there is gathers into the towns and the more open straths by the river. At the Gweebarra we leave the Rosses—the name of the district between the river and Dunglow—and when within a mile or two of Ardara, I was agreeably struck by a sudden change in the aspect of things. The farms were larger, the cultivation more intelligent, and there were many good two-storeyed farmhouses in place of hovels. The fact was that both soil and climate had improved, and the first sign I saw of something more genial was a luxuriantly flowering bush of wild honeysuckle. We were on a small property which had been bought some years ago by Mr Galbraith Hamilton from the late Mr Conolly, M.P. A little further on, in its woods of Scotch fir and ash, which are really very respectable timber, and the best I have seen since leaving Ards on the other side of Dunfanaghy, is the appropriately-named house of Woodhill, the seat of Colonel Tredenick, who has also a small estate here.

Leaving Ardara, which is relatively in an oasis, we come on the estates of Mr Murray Stewart, who, after effecting considerable sales, is still among the largest landowners in the country. Mr Stewart owns nearly 33,000 acres. His tenants are said to be fairly prosperous, and their holdings are considerably larger than those to the north. Including some good farms near the town of Donegal, the rents average nearly £6, 10s. Although they had not been raised since 1842, they have been reduced in the Land Courts, and the proprietor has appealed against the decisions. There has been but a single eviction on the property, and that under peculiar circumstances, and the farm remains still unoccupied. It is urged, indeed, by the land agents here, that it cannot be to the landlord's interest to evict, since it is impossible to replace any man who has been turned out. Could a clean sweep be made of the country, of course it would be another matter.

I was greatly struck by what I saw in the wildest spot in the long day's journey. The road climbs by steep ascents and sharp zigzags the deep green valley of Glen Gesh, which, indeed, is less a valley than a turf-clad chasm in the chain of the mountains. After the drought there was now but a single stream tumbling down over the rocks in little brawling cascades. But the precipitous sides are all seamed and wrinkled with water-courses, and after long rains, the glen, which reminds one of Glencoe, must be, like Glencoe, "a valley of weeping." I asked the driver the meaning of the vertical stone walls dividing the grazings along the hillsides, since they ended abruptly on the heights, so as to seem useless for purposes of enclosure. He explained that

where they ended the hills were so steep that even the sure-footed hill cattle could not tread them. Nevertheless, the other day, when these hills were surveyed by the Land Commissioners, one of them, who had sprained his ankle and could not walk, and who happened to be a Louth fox-hunter and first-rate horseman, to the astonishment of the natives, achieved the feat of riding up to the grazing zone of the cattle. The hovels in the glen are miserably poor, though neither better nor worse than the Highland cottages in Glencoe; so I was surprised to see cows of unusual size and in excellent condition grazing under the charge of children in tatters. The cows could hardly be worth less than £8 or £9, and when I remarked afterwards on the strange contrast, it was explained that the grazing in Glen Gesh is perhaps the best in Donegal; that the people, though they can spend little on their dress, are really tolerably well off, as they must be, seeing that some of them own three or four of these cattle. One of them pays £7 of rent. On the other hand, the sheep which graze in commonty on the bleak moorlands at the head of the glen were wretched animals. Hardy they must be to stand the climate on those storm-swept plateaux of barren bog, where the very peat-stacks are bound together by bands of rushes and ballasted with heavy stones to prevent their being blown away. The sheep are said to give much trouble, as they are apt to stray far in search of food, and small blame to them. I should have pitied them more had not the lot of those dumb animals seemed enviable compared to that of the occupants of the neighbouring police barracks, which must be about the least desirable quarter in Ireland.

Driving on, with the huge mass of Slieve Liagh or League full before us, we came at last to the hamlet of Carrick. Here is the hotel which is famous far and near, and under the special patronage of the Messrs Musgrave, the present proprietors of the parish. Much to my disappointment, I could not be taken in. The hall was full of the luggage of earlier arrivals, and shake-downs, &c., were being strewn everywhere. For the benefit of future tourists, however, I begged the landlord, Mr Walker, of whom everybody I have met has spoken in the highest terms, to show me over his house. I can say nothing of the cuisine, which I did not try, but everything else was most attractive. There were a roomy hall and airy corridors; a spacious coffee-room with enormous windows; bright bedrooms with pleasant views. The salmon and sea-trout fishing in the Carrick and other streams is reserved by the Messrs Musgrave for the use of visitors to the hotel, the only payment being £1 for the licence—an indispensable preliminary everywhere in Ireland for salmon and sea-trout fishing. As it turned out, I had the less cause to regret not being received that it came on to rain heavily that evening and continued to rain all the next day. I could have seen nothing of the cliff scenery at the back of Slieve Liagh, than which there is said to be nothing finer in Ireland. From a height of about 1900 feet, the mountain sinks straight into the Bay of Donegal, while the gigantic escarpment is gorgeously tinted with the glowing colours of manifold metal stains. I believe there are two things specially to be done from Carrick. One is a trip by boat in the bay from Teelin Bay to Carrigan Head; the other is the walk of the "One

Man's Path," which forms the crest of Slieve Liagh, said to be trying even in calm weather to any but the strongest heads. At the same time, men who have done it tell me the danger is greatly exaggerated, though, as the narrow path shelves on either side towards an abyss, it would be unpleasant or impracticable if half a gale were blowing. The drive along the deeply indented shores of the bay to Killybegs, skirting creeks and crossing sea-arms, cutting across the necks of promontories and sometimes ascending to considerable heights, must be exceedingly fine in clear weather. As it was, through the mists and the driving showers, in the fitful blinks of the watery sunshine, I caught occasional glimpses of distant mountains on the opposite shores of Sligo and Leitrim. But it was pleasant to come down into the comparative shelter of the little Bay of Killybegs, with its placid roadstead, literally clasped in the green arms of two of the long low promontories which interlock themselves.

From facts which I shall state, there can be no question that the condition of the tenants on the northern shore of the Bay of Donegal is superior to anything I have described since I wrote from Dunfanaghy. It is obvious that the climate must be far more genial, and it is said closely to resemble that of Kerry. Driving along the road from Carrick to the town of Donegal, I saw bright gardens round some of the better class of houses, with dahlias and gladioli of the most vivid tints. Before not a few of the meanest cottages were great bushes of hydrangeas and fuchsias, such as flourish in the Cornish villages towards the Land's End, with fragrant beds of mignonette and brilliant nasturtiums. Within the last

fifteen years large transfers of land have taken place in the neighbourhood of Killybegs. The parish of Glencolumbkill, lying around Carrick, was bought in 1868 from the late Mr Conolly by the Messrs Musgrave, of Belfast and Londonderry. Mr Conolly, familiarly known as "Honest Tom," was one of the largest proprietors in Donegal, and perhaps the most popular landlord in north-western Ireland. He made it his boast that he never raised a rent, which was the more creditable to him that he fell into grievous difficulties, though the trustees on the estates have still a nominal rental of some £7000. The Messrs Musgrave, who succeeded to him in Glencolumbkill, have been at least as liberal, and even more actively benevolent, though Mr Conolly tried to do much for the country. In 1879, just before the "distressful winter" and the land agitation, they annexed the adjacent parish of Kilcar, buying it from Mr Murray Stewart. The rental of the former estate was £1080, that of the other about £1600. It is to be remarked that they had acquired a property which admittedly had always been extremely low rented. Nevertheless, in the winter of 1881 the tenants on their estates made the modest proposal for a reduction of 50 per cent on the rents, with the wiping out of arrears, which, by the way, were insignificant, and for which no tenant had been pressed. Here we have a specific case, which illustrates the extremes to which the Land League agitation was carried. The answer of the Messrs Musgrave was equally specific, and, so far as I know, it has never been contradicted. It tells a story of barren and hazardous investments in the interest of the tenants, which the tenants failed to appreciate; and assuredly it is by no means

encouraging for liberally minded landlords. In the first place, the answer alleges those causes of local distress, which I have already touched upon at considerable length. It suggests the palliatives short of emigration which I have suggested—paid labour, better cultivation, and more profitable markets. Then it goes on to state what the Messrs Musgrave had done in that direction. They had provided the Carrick Hotel to induce an influx of visitors, expending £5000, and receiving a nominal rent. They had spent £6000 in wages in ten years on the estates. On the failure of the potato crop in 1879 they engaged a body of labourers for the reclamation of waste lands. They made several miles of new roads at a cost of £2100. They arranged for the expenditure of £1200 on a new pier. They paid £800 towards a narrow-gauge railway through the gap of Barnesmore, near Donegal. They bought up lands for their tenants at a cost of £2450, that they might obtain a Government loan for land improvement, "our object being to provide enclosed pasture for winter feeding for improved breeds of cattle and sheep, and we hope to make arrangements which will enable our tenants to cross these with their own stock, and thus greatly increase the value of their produce." I may add that Messrs Musgrave had spent large sums in bringing high-bred rams into the county. By contributing £1000 they arranged with the Piers Commission for the construction of a pier at Teelin harbour, costing £8000; and for a further outlay of £450 they built another pier at Agragh. In return for all that—for liberal wages and for markets more accessible than when the chickens sold at 2d. apiece—they had only made a rise of £154 upon £2700 of rents

which had never been raised since 1818. These facts, I say, have never been disputed. Yet the tenants respond to such unexampled liberality by demands for a reduction of 50 per cent, and the demands were made through the medium of their priests; and this fact is a most discouraging omen for Ireland.

As to the ability of the tenants to pay, here are some other collateral and circumstantial facts. In Gweedore, as I said, the emigration generally went on through the poorhouse; and, in short, paupers have been shipped at the cost of the Government. Here there has been no charitable emigration, except that of young women under the auspices of Mr Vere Foster. I have the figures from the very intelligent landlord of the inn at Killybegs, who has the direction of the emigration. Roughly speaking, the average during the last four years has been 500 per annum, from the adjacent parishes of Glencolumbkill, Kilcar, and Killybegs. Of these, 100 have been Mr Foster's young women. Of the remaining 400, one-half have paid wholly for their own passages; the other half have been assisted by money remitted from America. This year the total is likely to fall off by at least one-half,—partly because Mr Foster's funds are partially exhausted, partly for reasons which I shall explain. At the first blush, it seems most satisfactory to the country that the people should be able to emigrate at their own expense. But that first impression is modified on further examination. In reality, the life-blood of these districts is being drained away. It is the able-bodied who are assisted to emigrate; the aged and the weak and the children remain behind. Crofts are going out of cultivation because there are no strong arms to till

them. The frail fishermen who are left behind have to hug the rocks and the coasts, and cannot go to the deep water where the fishes are to be found. Even female domestic servants become scarcer every day; and they too, when they have saved up sufficient to pay for their passages, go out to America in search of service and husbands. The tide has been setting steadily from South Donegal towards Derry, where these people embark on the packets of the Anchor Line. The only redeeming point is that, when they have gone, they are most regular in sending back money for the support of their poor relations. But there are other proofs of their relative prosperity. There is no exodus of the harvesters from South Donegal to Scotland. When there is a death in the district, the friends assembling for the funeral always subscribe to "their clergy." Their respect for the departed is shown by the amount of the offerings "paid over him," as they say; it is their pride to contribute as much as possible, and on one very recent occasion the total amount was over £60; while the payment for tenant-right in these parts sometimes runs to twenty, to twenty-three, or even twenty-five years' purchase. Here, as in Gweedore, the priests have been assiduously preaching temperance, with similar results. I have not met a car-driver in this district who is not a teetotaller. At this moment a temperance mission is being conducted in the Catholic Church at Killybegs. The priests speak plainly but eloquently to enthusiastic audiences, expatiating on the miseries of the old state of things. Along the steep lane leading up to the church is a line of stalls for the sale of religious books and rosaries, sacred images and pictures; and they are evi-

dently doing a very brisk business. There is but a booth or two which concern themselves with the needs of the flesh, and at these there are sold great loaves of home-baked bread, with baskets of the dulse or purple sea-weed by way of savouring, and green apples of horribly indigestible appearance. I have no wish to offend the susceptibilities of the Irish, or to diminish the merits or the self-sacrifice of temperance folks; but I must say for myself, that were I condemned to drink Irish whisky, I should be willing to sign the pledge to-morrow. *De gustibus non est disputandum.* I not only dislike, but distrust it. It is not merely unpleasant to the taste at the moment, but it sticks pertinaciously to the palate.

As for the effects of the land legislation in Donegal, I hesitate as yet to say much. All these Irish land matters are complicated beyond belief. As to the districts of Gweedore and the Rosses, I have little difficulty in pronouncing. When a man can fairly pay nothing, any abatement of rent can be of small consequence one way or another. What can be more anomalous than a state of things where few of the tenants can pay a rent for their crofts; where they must either go in search of labour hundreds of miles away, or depend on precarious remittances from relations beyond the seas? The difficulty is as to speaking of southern Donegal. But even as to that, I may say unhesitatingly that the curse of the present state of things consists in there being no sense of finality. The Government has done much for the tenants, and may possibly do much more under the pressure of an increase of the Parliamentary strength of the National members. Tenants tell me,

and often with truth, that they are still heavily over-rented. They think—and they are assured—that they would be fools to pay money which in a few years hence they might morally, if not legally, reclaim. While the landlords say—and the truth of that is undeniable—that after the recent serious reductions, they are every way worse off than before. The holders of Egyptian stock might welcome a measure which, though cutting down their interest, by giving substantial guarantees, would nevertheless increase the value of their capital. At all events they could realise at any moment. But the Irish landlords find it harder to collect their rents than before, since the tenants are waiting and hoping for another bout of agitation. The landlords cannot sell; for in that expectation of theirs few tenants will buy, while no speculative investor will embarrass himself with Irish property. Estates are put up and withdrawn from the auction-room, because there is no higher offer than eight or nine years' purchase; so that even should the land market happily grow brisker, a load of the land is hanging on the markets. I conversed with several of the large land agents in Dublin. All agreed that nothing would tempt them to risk any money in Irish land. All said that they would recommend their clients to sell at anything like reasonable prices—in other words, they could only recommend the impossible. What is wanted, I repeat, is the belief in the finality in land legislation, which is felt in neither the one quarter nor the other.

VI.

BALLYSHANNON, DONEGAL,
September 2.

A SHOWERY day in Ireland has its charms. The drive from Killybegs to Donegal was very beautiful. Drifting veils of mist were floating before the Sligo hills; gusts of wind swept the white-crested billows across the surface of the bay; and when the sun broke out brilliantly between the flying showers, each white rock and whitewashed cottage was gleaming and sparkling on the emerald steeps, while the rays were reflected in all the colours of the rainbow from the vapours which lay heavily on the hills to the east. But though a showery day may be delightful for its picturesque effects, a time of settled downpour is a very different thing. Remarking a great grazing farm, in the occupation of Mr Bustard, a proprietor in the neighbourhood, which, stretching up towards the mountains from the shores of the bay, is said to carry six hundred head of cattle, I reached the town of Donegal, where I changed cars. Donegal, which is almost entirely owned by Lord Arran, is remarkable for the ruins of its venerable castle, and still more for the exceeding beauty of its situation.

As to the ten miles which lie between it and Ballyshannon, I can say little or nothing. The gusts had risen to a gale, and storms of rain were beating in our faces, or rather against our cheeks. In such circumstances one cowers like a hare in the snow-drifts, and it would be next to impossible to open the eyes, even if anything of the landscape were visible. There are no waterproof aprons on these private cars, which is perhaps of the less consequence that the prudent traveller will provide his own wrapper. But there is neither tarpauling nor covering of any kind to throw over the baggage; and if even a few yards of sacking were supplied, it would do much for the comfort of tourists. Intelligent landlords would do well to see to that.

Ballyshannon, with its rather comically sounding name, is romantically situated on the river Erne. Immediately below the picturesque old bridge, with its fourteen arches, from which, by the way, is one of the best of the salmon-casts in the river, are the falls and the famous salmon-leap. The broad flood of the Erne precipitates itself over a concave barrier of rugged brown rocks into black pools that are seething in sheets of foam, or boiling with white foam-bubbles in the still black water; while below you look out to the open sea, over the stretching spots of sand and between the high ranges of wind-driven sand-dunes. Ballyshannon has historical associations of its own, and is the chief place of a district which is renowned for its romances and its legends. Sundry volumes of interest have been written on this lower valley of the Erne. "Authentic" Irish history, which begins about six centuries before the Christian

era, has its story to tell about the falls. They take their name of Assaroe—the cataract of Hugh Roe—from the fate that befell an Irish monarch, who was drowned in attempting the passage of the river here. His only daughter, and the heiress of his realms, was the cause of a succession of *teterrima bella*. In comparatively recent times St Patrick and the blessed Columba passed this way, leaving the memory of many a legend and miracle behind them which are still household tales with the people. Then after the Hibernian chronicles become credible to foreign sceptics, Ballyshannon and Belleek, situated four miles higher up the river, were the scenes of many a bloody battle. For they commanded the only passages across the Erne, and guarded Tyrconnel, which stretches away to the north, against any invading armies from the southward. They are still considered of strategical importance, and are occupied by troops in some force when the surrounding county is unsettled. During the wars with the French, at the beginning of the century, no less than three barracks were erected here. In one of them, which has a charming look-out upon the bridge, the rooms are still to be seen which were occupied by Lord Castlereagh, then the Hon. Mr Stewart, when he was startled by the apparition of the Green Lady. It is mentioned, if I may trust my memory, in Lockhart's Life of Scott, *apropos* to Scott's meeting his lordship in Paris. Since then the spectre has been repeatedly visible. The old barracks are now tenanted by a member of a Belfast firm of wine and spirit dealers, who sleeps in the haunted room. He has never been disturbed by the apparition himself, but he was good enough to show me his apartment; and the black

back closet, from which the lady is said to emerge, seemed likely enough to be haunted by a troubled spirit. I could well imagine some tremor of the nerves when the winds were howling of a night over the rush of the river.

The scenery of the Erne from Ballyshannon up to Belleek should be as seductive to the artist as it has hitherto been to the salmon-fisher. Each bend in the windings among the hills and holms opens up some new and enchanting prospect, where the stern and the soft are exquisitely mingled. Luxuriantly feathering woods cover promontories and gentle eminences, while around them and beneath the river swirls down in a rapid alternation of pools and rushes. It falls in a few miles 150 feet. Some pleasant gentlemen's seats show their chimneys above the trees. One of them, Camlin, is famous for its gardens, in which her Majesty's head gardener at Hampton Court served his apprenticeship. But incomparably the most finely situated of all is Cliff, very near to Belleek, the west-country residence of the late Mr Conolly. For the last nine years it has been rented by Mr L. H. Moore, senior partner in the Ballyshannon Fishing Company, who very liberally permits the public to drive through the beautiful grounds. As the approach to Cliff is carried along at a considerable height, it commands a succession of noble views of the Erne, with the sea on the horizon to the west and Ballyshannon in the middle distance. As for the site of the mansion, it was unmistakably marked out by nature. On a jutting knoll, cut down to the eastward into flower-gardens, the windows of the principal sitting-rooms actually overhang the rocky stream, looking up a long and

heavily wooded reach, backed up by swelling eminences of bright green turf, and with the black chain of the Sligo mountains frowning in the background. The late Mr Conolly liked the view so well that he is said never to have suffered it to be intercepted by any one sitting at the bottom of his dining table. Mr Moore, to whom I am deeply indebted for much valuable information, possesses what are probably the finest specimens in existence of the Belleek pottery ware; and he showed me besides what was perhaps even more interesting—a complete collection of the fishes from the river and the neighbouring lochs.

Indeed, the objects of interest in the neighbourhood of Ballyshannon and Belleek are so many that it is difficult to know where to begin in describing them, and still more difficult to compress the descriptions within reasonable limits. In the first place, there are the fisheries, the potteries, and the Lough Erne Drainage and Reclamation Works, although the stories of the first and the last are unfortunately mixed up with each other. It is to be feared that the glories of the famous rod-fishing of the Erne are gone by. Already the sport has greatly fallen off, owing to the extensive dredging going on in the lake, though the fishermen have been fortunate during the last few days, thanks to the dredger having gone out of repair. One gentleman the day before yesterday had landed four fish averaging 15 lb. Should these drainage works be brought to a successful termination, they will undoubtedly be of great benefit to the district. Lough Erne is formed by two vast lakes, connected near Enniskillen by a narrow channel. The one runs up to no great distance from the town of

Cavan, the other comes down to the neighbourhood of the sea above Belleek. The upper lake, like the eastern end of the lower one, is covered with innumerable islands; in great part it is practically a network of lagoons, and the shores in most places are low and swampy. The drainage of a vast watershed flows into it, the waters rising to a great height in the autumn, annually submerging for months an area of nearly 18,000 acres. The chief object of the drainage works is to save that area from flooding. A set of enormous gates—the greatest in the world—have been erected across the Erne at Belleek. They are constructed of a strength to resist the full static pressure of the lake, and to dam back the outflow of the water, so as always to maintain an invariable level. Then when, owing to the heavy rainfall, the water is rising in the upper loch, intelligence is to be telegraphed from Belturbet, at the upper end—the gates are opened and the excess escapes. The original estimate for the works was £170,000. Towards that £15,000 was given from the Consolidated Fund; as much more was advanced and charged upon adjacent baronies, their proportions being regulated by the benefits they would gain. The promoters provide the rest of the capital. The flooded districts will be liable to drainage rates for thirty-five years, and it is a question whether any excess over the estimates must be met compulsorily by those landlords who profit by the reclamations and improvements. Already large sums must have been expended. The dredging plant cost £14,000, and the dredging has been going briskly forward. The huge gates have been put up, the beautiful Belleek Falls have been blown away,

and the course of the river there has been regulated by walls of masonry. I may mention that the gates, which seem a marvel of engineering science, are the patent of Mr Stoney of London, and his services have also been engaged for the proposed Manchester Ship Canal, for which he would provide twenty of them. Owing to a most ingenious adaptation of movable rollers, which eases the jam of the water-pressure at the sides, I easily lifted one of the gates by turning a little hand-wheel, although the gate weighs thirteen tons. I need not say that the employment of labour has been of no small benefit to the district. Five hundred men are employed, and the lowest wages are 2s. 6d. per day. Whether the contractors always have value for their wages is another question,—since I am told that some of the labourers daily walk from six to ten miles to and from their work. The contractors would gladly employ double the number; and it is strongly suggestive of the Irish character that they cannot engage the additional hands. Many of the crofters will leave Donegal for the Scotch harvests, partly because it is an old practice, partly, perhaps, because the harvesting has the excitement of picnicing. But they will not come to labour in their native country, because the work is unfamiliar and savours of drudgery. It is precisely the experience of Lord George Hill forty years ago, which I referred to in my letter from Gweedore. To the reclamation scheme are attached magnificent navigation proposals, which I shall only refer to in passing, as they appear unlikely to be realised, at all events for the present. It is a grand idea, certainly, to combine the regulation of the drainage of an area of 900,000 acres with the inland navigation of nine coun-

ties. At present there appear to be actually canals, which have been so far constructed, though not in working order, between Belturbet and Belfast to the north, and Belturbet and Limerick to the south. The idea is to open up these canals so as to bring Lough Erne into regular steam communication with seaports at either end of Ireland. Assuredly, if the dream be ever realised, it will be a giant stride in advance, for at present there is but a single small public steamer on the long expanse of Lough Erne. It belongs to Mr Porter, one of the riparian landlords, and plies at irregular times to various places on the lough.

I said that these works have sadly interfered with the fisheries. The celebrated Ballyshannon fisheries for salmon and eel were bought in 1866 from Mr Conolly for £45,000. At that time they had been let to Dr Sheil, a well-known resident in the neighbourhood, for £1100 per annum. The purchasers were Mr H. L. Moore, his younger brother, and Mr Alexander, who are also jointly interested in the fisheries of the Ban and the Foyle. As for salmon, 800 have been netted in one day towards the end of June; in a single draught, from the pool below the Assaroe Falls, 241 fish have been taken. The eel-fishings are also of great value. In the fifteenth century, by-the-by, there were eel-weirs in the river belonging to the Cistercian Abbey of Assaroe. During their works at Belleek, the drainage contractors had removed the uppermost and most profitable of Messrs Moore's four eel-weirs. The owners of the weirs brought an action, and have obtained £10,000 in compensation. They claimed also for injury to the salmon netting, as the gates may probably prove a permanent

obstruction to the fish running up to their spawning grounds. The opinions of experts differed widely as to what is likely to happen. The upshot was, that the jury gave a sum of £4800, which can only have been an illogical compromise. The operations will either be nearly harmless or destructive; in the latter case the damages will be wholly illusory. As for any compensation for the rod-fishing, the judge summed up dead against the claim and the jury rejected it. The trial appears to have been conducted in thoroughly Irish fashion. The judge avowed that he had no sympathy with the rod-fishers. His lordship said that he had once caught a salmon himself, or rather a salmon had caught him. He was never so relieved as when the fish broke away, as he was in mortal dread of being dragged into the river. Unhappily the matter is likely to prove no joke to the gillies, who have hitherto earned high wages by attending gentlemen. Already regular visitors from England have ceased to come to their favourite haunts, and the sport is sure to go on deteriorating. Yesterday the dredgers had got to work again, and the stream was pitiably discoloured. The price of fishing has hitherto been £4 per week—each rod having the right of keeping two fish. I have not seen the latest returns; but in 1881 fifty-three anglers in 151 weeks killed no less than 904 fish, weighing 8300 lb. Last year Mr Bates, a famous fisherman, caught 114 salmon of 1100 lb. in five weeks. The average of the angled fish is 9 lb.; the biggest ever taken in the nets was a monster of 52 lb. There has never been good trouting in the Erne. The trout in the lake run ordinarily to 4 lb. and 5 lb., though they have been caught weighing as much as 14 lb. Among

the specimens shown at Cliff, I remarked a species of trout which I have never seen elsewhere; the local name is the sonaghan. Another original native was the pollen, a fresh-water herring from the neighbouring Lough Melvin—a fish which is also to be found in great numbers in Lough Neagh. From Lough Melvin came also the char and the gillaroo: nine miles long by two, it extends to within a few miles of Belleek. There are several boats upon it, with good quarters at Garrison, which is, however, at the more distant end.

A visit to the eel-weirs was extremely interesting. The average weight of the eels is 2 lb., though they run to 9 lb. Occasionally two hundred boxfuls of 120 lb. each are taken on some of the dark and stormy nights, on which the eels by preference make their descent in shoals. They are sent by rail and steamer to London *viâ* Greenore and Holyhead, being despatched, as a rule, each morning except Friday, and arriving in forty-eight hours. But when the London markets are dull, the dealers telegraph, and the eels are kept waiting in their tanks till prices take a turn for the better. The arrangements for taking them are simple and deadly. The rush of the river is diverted by artificial barriers into a side channel. These barriers converge towards a narrow gateway, the contracted stream being filled by the distended mouth of a bag-net. The bag-net ends in a long tail or tube of strong close netting, which is dragged down the current for a score of yards or so, the orifice at the end being easily opened and shut again. The eels are swept naturally into this tube. Once there, there is no backing out again; they are held hard and fast by the force of the stream. The weir men haul up

the tube by a hook at the end of a pole, shaking each successive batch of prisoners into the tanks. Even prettier and more ingenious are the arrangements for salmon-breeding. Mr Moore, on applying for spawn to some of the Perthshire ponds, found he could not be supplied with a sufficient quantity. Accordingly he started an establishment of his own, and this year he hopes to turn out a million of young fish. The spawning salmon ascending the river are taken through their habits like the eels, though in the reverse fashion. They are guided also by breakwaters into a stream, which ends in a very acute angle formed by two hanging gratings of wood. In the angle, which points upwards, the fish finds an opening just sufficient to admit him, and he forces himself through. He finds himself caught in a natural reservoir in the bed of the river, and hardly by any accident can he get out as he came in, for he will always swim past the almost imperceptible exit. As the spawning season comes on, the captured salmon are daily swept out in nets and passed on into a set of small tanks. There they can be conveniently examined each day. Any of them on the brink of spawning are taken out, the spawn is stroked gently into a basin and fertilised with the milt of a "cock-fish." Next the spawn is carried up to the hatching-beds in a house on the cliff above. It is spread out on shallow trays of percolated metal—a Canadian invention—which can be packed closely by being piled one on the top of the other. Over these the water is perpetually trickling from a spring, after being filtered through flannel, the spring water, strange to say, being found more suitable for the purpose than that of the

river, which is the young salmon's natural nursery. But in case of any failure, a most clever apparatus has been devised to pump up water from the river. The motive power comes from a great water-wheel secured to a barge moored in the river, attached to the bank by sliding iron shafts, which give and take with the fall or rise of the river, and which is anchored, besides, to the bank 100 yards away by a formidable iron chain. The water-wheel sets a wheel-pump in motion, which has been erected halfway up the rocks. Should the water gear get out of order, it may be unshipped, and then the wheel-pump can be worked by hand. Before taking leave of these interesting fishings, I may mention that during the season, when the salmon are running, Messrs Moore employ a force of upwards of one hundred and fifty watchmen. Nor are the numbers at all excessive. I spoke to one of these men who is permanently engaged. He told me that during the worst of the land agitation, bands of poachers fifteen strong were by no means uncommon. They would dress up in women's caps and petticoats, and would come armed with picks, scythes, and guns. The keepers, of course, were armed also; but though hats were occasionally riddled, no serious damage seems to have been done. Some of the offenders were caught and convicted, being fined from £5 to £7. I asked if they were generally able to pay, and was informed that they could and did, and that, at all events, in almost every case, the fine was made up by public contribution, which is a suggestive fact as to the common sympathies of the lower Irish when it is a question of the infraction of English laws, and a proof that the people hereabouts must be far removed from destitution.

Yet I am told that there were few more poverty-stricken places in Ireland than Belleek before the establishment of the pottery works. That took place about twenty-two years ago. As it happened, I yesterday met at the Belleek Hotel the gentleman with whom the idea had originated. Mr Bloomfield, who owns property in the neighbourhood, has been unfortunate enough, as he remarked to me, to try to benefit his country people. He was struck with the extreme brilliancy of the white-wash on the cottages in the neighbourhood, and examined into the reason. The cause was discovered to be the presence of a certain clay which seemed specially adapted to the manufacture of porcelain. Mr Bloomfield enlisted the assistance and capital of Mr M'Burney, a wealthy Dublin china merchant. They built the magnificent building I visited. They engaged an able manager; they brought over skilled artisans from England to teach the natives; they turned out beautiful specimens of artistic work; they did a still brisker business in such commonplace objects as the sanitary appliances of Messrs Jennings—and they lost a very great deal of money. After passing through various hands, as I believe, the Belleek works were closed about a fortnight ago, 160 workpeople being thrown out of employment; the truth being that the original discovery to which they were due had been a delusion, though not a mistake. The clay was there, and it was all that could be desired for quality, but in such insignificant proportions that it did not repay extraction. The factory might have been more profitably established at any other spot in the island, nearer to the places whence it drew its materials. The clay came from Devon or Corn-

wall, the felspar was fetched from Cornwall, the flints from Antrim, the fuel from the Clyde. The establishment naturally closed its doors, but I am glad to say it is to reopen them again, and under very singular circumstances. I am glad to say so, for the labourers have hitherto been paid about 10s. per week, and the skilled hands so high as £2, 10s. The buildings, the costly plant, goodwill, &c., have been sold to a local company, on a 999 years' lease, at a nominal rent of £50, and for the insignificant sum of £4500. The money has been found hereabouts; it has been raised in £1 shares, to be paid up by small instalments. The Nationalists are said to have originated the movement, and I heartily wish them all success. The surest panacea for the troubles of Ireland would be the giving the people small stakes in such industrial undertakings, the profits of which must depend on peace. And the Belleek potteries have developed native talent. I saw a Flaxman's Venus, and a cup shaped after the shell of the sea-urchin, by a clever artisan from the town of Ballyshannon, and they were veritable masterpieces of graceful execution.

Thanks to the labour that has been employed here of late, Belleek must be an exceptionally eligible neighbourhood. Yet in proof of what I have said of the paralysis in the land-market, I may mention that two of the town lands in the village and about it were exposed for sale the other day. Seven years ago they had fetched £7500. There was no offer now at the public auction, and the highest private bid was £2300. Yet the land here is extremely high rented. It brings in on an average £2, 5s. per Irish acre—the Irish acre is to the English as $5\frac{1}{2}$ to $6\frac{1}{4}$—and though some of the soil

is admirable, much is stony and sterile. Nowhere have I been struck so much as here with the splendid crops of hay. More is raised in some places on unmanured meadow-land than would be produced on a fair English estate after liberal top-dressing. Occasionally, indeed, it is sold as it stands, at £7, 10s. per Irish acre, the purchaser undertaking all expenses. And driving in from Belleek to Ballyshannon, where the fields, with a limestone subsoil, slope towards the south and the river, the oat crops must often have been higher than my waist, and the potatoes were equally luxuriant. I shall bring this lengthy letter to a close with a word about the famous pilgrimage station of Lough Derg. It is but four miles from Pettigo Station on the Enniskillen Railway, and had I passed by Ballyshannon a fortnight ago, I should certainly have visited it. But the season of the pilgrimages comes to an end on the 15th of August. There is nothing to see now but a lonely lough among desolate hills, with the empty buildings that overcrowd a small, low, rocky island. I made many inquiries, however, and have been assured that the pilgrimages go forward more enthusiastically than ever. The numbers of the present year had exceeded those in any previous one; the ferryman, who has a monopoly of passing the pilgrims over, pays £200 for the privilege, instead of £100 as formerly, and the charge per passage has been raised from 6d. to 8d., which appears pretty conclusively to prove that freethought has not been spreading among the peasantry. For emigration has been going on all the time, and the population of the West has been dwindling. I forgot to praise the Belleek Hotel, which I inspected, although I had been

denied admittance. In fact, the three far-renowned hotels of Donegal—Gweedore, Carrick, and Belleek—might as well not exist at all, so far as tourists passing in the height of the season are concerned. The Belleek house used to have a beautiful look-out on the fall, but the drainage contractors have literally blasted the landlord's prospects. He claimed compensation, but got none, the judge having as little sympathy with river scenery as with salmon-fishing.

VII.

SLIGO, *September* 2.

I PRAISED the small village inns of Donegal. I was agreeably surprised by the comfort and the cleanliness, and fondly hoped that in more pretentious establishments in the towns there would be no falling off in these respects. I am sorry to say that since then I have been stumbling into the typical Irish hotels as described by Lever in his novels and Thackeray in his 'Sketch Book,' so I feel bound to say something as to the reverse of the medal. Things appear to be very much the same as when the Harry Lorrequers and Jack Hintons went rattling about the country. I shall mention no names, because the people invariably do their best to please one. There is no landlord in any of these hotels, or at least he is never visible. 'Waiter, boots, and chamber-maid manage the establishment, mixing up the duties of their respective departments. There is generally little to complain of as to the beds, but the rooms are fusty and sadly in need of sweeping. The smallest repairs are postponed indefinitely, sometimes with serious results. In one room I occupied, a brass bell was tied to a nail near the ceiling by a tag of

worsted. Remarking on the fragility of the arrangement, I was assured it would "howld." The bell came down that very night, smashing the shade over a china statuette. Then, in place of fetching the bell-hanger, the wire was passed over a curtain rod, converted into a temporary pulley, so that one might ring by hauling on the guy at a particular angle. As a study of eccentric contrasts, I may as well sketch another apartment. Daylight is visible all around the door, and the windows shake in the sashes at the slightest puff of wind. There is a faded rug spread on a gorgeous new carpet, an oaken coal-box, handsomely bound in brass, beside a rusty fireplace with shattered metal plates. There is a Correggio's "Magdalen," with other good engravings, hanging on the tattered and weather-stained wall-paper. I order dinner at seven, and have it served at a quarter to eight. I come down to breakfast, to find the cloth laid; but a cigar end and half-burnt match are lying where they were left the night before. As for the glasses used at dinner, they have been cleared away as they were left, and carefully arranged with other comparatively clean ones on the great piano that does duty for a sideboard. The materials of the breakfasts are generally good; though five mornings out of six I sit down to ham and eggs, for the best of reasons. But the eggs are fresh, and the ham not only finely flavoured, but tender—very different from the dressed hippopotamus hide which is invariably given one in English hotels. Towards afternoon, while writing this, I ring parenthetically for beer, biscuits, and cheese. After half an hour or so, the excellent draught ale and the biscuits are brought, the waiter remarking, "I brought them in a hurry, sir, because I

knew you were waiting, but the cheese is locked away in the cellar, and the key is mislaid. If it pleased you to wait for a minute or two more, the woman says that maybe she would remember where she hid it." By the way, when I had turned at breakfast to the piano for a mustard-pot, I had a choice of three. In the first I opened was a luxuriant growth of white fungus. It is impossible not to admire the *bonhomie* with which the waiter conceals his contempt for susceptibilities he certainly does not understand. Though he works hard, he occasionally relaxes. Coming in from a walk, I find three gentlemen sitting over their whisky-and-water in my private room. Excusing myself for disturbing them —which, however, I do not do—they affably accept the apology, and I have to supplement sarcasm with expostulation before they reluctantly make a move. It appeared on inquiry that the waiter and the boots had gone out together to attend a public meeting in the town-hall, leaving the house to attend to itself. I have tried to give some idea of the life, as my short experiences have shown it me, in the old-fashioned Irish hotels. Surely there are openings here for some of those American-Irish who have come back to the old country with dollars and ideas, to run smart establishments on modern lines. Thus the great house in which I am writing is full of Irish company, and there is a perpetual stamping and pattering of feet over the wax-cloth on the creaking wooden stairs and passages. If English tourists, with deeper purses, were tempted as well, the speculation could hardly fail to pay handsomely. Meantime, it is impossible not to like these makeshift people — they are so invariably willing and

good-tempered; and it would be foolish to fret over trifling annoyances which are the faults of immemorial want of system, though I own it is very far from pleasant to see the boots bring up the toast in his fingers.

On the whole, there is little to repay one in the coast drive from Ballyshannon to Sligo. Behind, Slieve Liagh and his lofty fellows on the northern shore of the Donegal Bay are still picturesque objects; before is the Sligo range, ending in the strange truncated table-land of Knocknarea, with ridges somewhat resembling those "Samson's Ribs" which overhang the Queen's Drive near Edinburgh, though really the brown Knocknarea is of carboniferous limestone. We see a couple of small steamers stranded within the Ballyshannon bar; strange that they should have passed it safely to come to grief, and the car-driver talked of rumours of foul play. On the opposite side of the estuary was a grim and massive, roofless stone mansion of the castellated-gaol order of architecture. It had been built, the driver said, though never finished, by a certain Squire Folliot, and if so, it might be christened Folliot's Folly. There was not a trace of any beginning of ornamental gardening about the dreary house, which is buffeted by every gale from the Atlantic. A few miles further, and we drive through the long street of the renowned watering-place of Bundoran. It is a favourite resort of sea-bathers, and I should fancy, of blue devils. I had heard it spoken of as an earthly paradise, but I cannot say I thought much of this West of Ireland Scarborough. It stands on a precipitous strip of rocks and sands between the sad sea-waves and the sadder peat-

bogs, with melancholy brown mountains forming a distant background. The outer doors of most of the lodging-houses stood open; likewise the doors of parlours immediately within the entrance-passages, so that we could take flying inventories of the furniture, and inspect the preparations for early teas. There is nothing whatever for the visitors to do, and they seemed to be doing nothing indefatigably, for the street was full of loungers, who welcome the passage of the car. It was a pleasant change from that listless inactivity to the industry of peat-hauling. The turf should be carried home before the beginning of the harvest, but many of the people in these parishes were out and about the bogs to-day. Most of the heavier carts, drawn by horses, are fitted with high wooden frames to hold the peat. There were many liliputian donkey-carts too, made after the same model; but most characteristic of all were the sumpter-donkeys, on which the peats were loaded in panniers. The panniers are slung across a plaited straw pad or pommel by a straw-rope passed across a *bât*, or curved piece of wood; and the whole apparatus is designated *feiniog* in Irish. How many wearisome journeys these miserable asses must make before bringing home the year's firing for a hovel! Then, as we came within some ten miles of Sligo, we met a stream of traffic. It was market-day, and peasants and farmers were on their way home. Without asking a question of any one, I could see that here was nothing of distress, not to speak of destitution. Very different was the appearance of these good folks from that of the market people I have met between Gweedore and Dunfanaghy. There were a number of well-

horsed cars, each with their four well-dressed men or women. Looking into cheerful and honest faces, I could not help remembering the recent murder of poor M'Mahon, and wondering whether these stout fellows would sit quietly and look on were one of their number ordered down to be butchered. Appearances are deceptive, but I could hardly believe it, though I know that men, without being cowards, may shrink from the vengeance of secret assassination societies. Then there was an interminable though interrupted file of those high-framed peat-carts of which I have made mention, most of them with a tolerably substantial animal in the shafts, though the Irish horses of all breeds seem to tend towards the weedy. And in many of these carts were women on wisps of straw, the wives or daughters, no doubt, of the drivers, and dressed so as to make me open my eyes till familiarity bred indifference. I know little of feminine dress, and cannot pretend to appraise it. But these women wore showy hats with black lace falls, and cloaks that looked like mantles or mantillas; some of them had ear-rings and flashy brooches, and when the dresses chanced to lift you got glimpses of embroidered petticoats. If people like these get reductions in the Land Courts, setting aside considerations of the justice of the reductions, surely the reductions must be of substantial benefit to them, unless, indeed, they should foster indolent habits. But there was nothing indicative of indolence in that show of cheap fashion; so I must presume that these tenants pay their increased profits into current accounts with the banks of Sligo. And the fires of agitation are more likely to smoulder than to blaze where men have material stakes in the

tranquillity of the country. Of a very different class were the men who drove the donkey-carts, yet even these seemed decently well off in their degree. The bodies and bars of the carts were brilliantly painted in blues and reds; the fellows who sat in them, though sometimes ragged, had more frequently an air of darned respectability. As for the women, who often accompanied them, they were warmly and decently clad. The only members of the parties I pitied were the donkeys, which, though necessarily in fair condition, were often terribly overweighted. It seems to me that no Irishman of any rank will walk if he can help it. And I confess that the habits of the country are contagious, or else there is something enervating in this Western air, for the most active Englishman soon takes to carring as kindly as any aboriginal of them all. For very much the greater part of the way our road had lain through the late Lord Palmerston's property, and he was notoriously one of the most liberal and energetic landlords in Ireland. Unavoidably an absentee, he nevertheless never ceased to look after his people, and he was equally lavish of money and trouble in getting rid of the vile system of rundale holdings. His fault, if he had a fault, was an excessive tenderness for the prejudices and local affections of his tenantry. When he subdivided the rundale lands in lots distributed round the dwellings, I believe he removed nobody. The consequence was an infinity of minute subdivisions, which still subsist. As may be inferred from what I have said of the looks and dress of the people, I saw as I passed many comfortable farms and unfamiliar signs of careful husbandry. There is a great extent of

wood, which Lord Palmerston had planted; there are miles of thorn hedges skirting the road. At the same time there are not a few very miserable hovels. That only shows that the most public-spirited of landlords cannot perform the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, and settle a score of families in comfort where five would have to struggle against starvation. I saw long and fertile stretches of land which well repay judicious expenditure; but in much of the country, as in that of Gweedore, humanity would suggest nothing but grazing and game preservation. Talking of game, Mr Ashley, the present owner of the Palmerston property, has a sporting residence, standing almost as conspicuously and as exposed as Squire Folliot's dismal Folly. I am told there is good snipe-shooting, and I daresay there may be sport with the wild-fowl; but it seemed to me that there could be nothing in the way of grouse-shooting nearer than that on the Knocknarea hills, which must be very many miles from the residence.

On making inquiry I found that, as I had supposed, the tenantry near Sligo are fairly prosperous. For two generations, at the least, they have been exceptionally fortunate in their landlords. Lord Palmerston, besides the improvements to which I have alluded, set the example of planting bent-grass along the sea-shore to check the drifting of the sands. Formerly whole farms were being drifted up, and it was no uncommon thing for a peasant to have to dig a passage to his door, or even shovel the sand from his roof; but Lord Palmerston's example has been so generally and successfully followed, that the danger has now wellnigh disappeared. His near neighbour, Sir Henry Gore-Booth, was equally liberal.

He encouraged improving tenants by lowering in place of raising their rents, and by making additions to their holdings. The late Mr Wynne of Hazlewood—a beautiful domain on the banks of Lough Gill, to which I looked across yesterday in the course of a walk—introduced so much of English comfort among his cottagers, that their neighbours enviously nicknamed them the "golden knockers"—a golden knocker being all that was wanted, in popular opinion, to reach the height of absurdity. The late Mr Cooper of Markree—Colonel Cooper, his nephew and heir, is lord-lieutenant of the county—besides establishing industrial schools, actually forced improvements and redistribution of the land upon his dependants at the cost of great temporary unpopularity, though afterwards the people were grateful for benefits they learned to appreciate. Moreover, by setting up salmon-ladders, Mr Cooper created the valuable salmon-fisheries at Ballysadere, now in his nephew's hands, and estimated at £5000 per annum. Besides the gentlemen I have mentioned, are Mr O'Hara to the southward, and Mr Lane-Fox, who have borne an equally high character. I am told that the rent reductions in the courts have not been very considerable, and have been chiefly on the Cooper estates. In fact the state of the country shows what may be done even here by a long course of spirited and generous management over an extensive area. One thousand to twelve hundred firkins of butter are sometimes sold in Sligo on one of the great market-days—the butter for the most part being consigned to Glasgow. The tenants have been paying money into the banks. Last year was better in that respect than any of the previous ten; 1884, however, threatens to be less

satisfactory, owing to the low prices of cattle. The land agitation, in one way, has done good here. Before it had unsettled things, the farmers had found it comparatively easy to obtain credit. They sometimes dealt with the usurers, or "gombeen men," who charged from 30 to 35 per cent, and they ran in debt to the tradespeople. Now they are more generally compelled to have recourse to the banks, which make advances at moderate rates where the security is sound. The tenants have likewise been borrowing largely under the Land Improvements Acts, —obtaining the money at 5 per cent, the capital debt being extinguished in thirty-three annual payments. These loans are spent upon buildings and drainage, so that the district must be steadily improving. I am informed, however, that these west-country men are less thrifty than their neighbours in northern and eastern Ulster. They are more inclined to indulge themselves when they have the means, and the gay dresses I remarked on the women were adduced in proof of that. There have been no large changes of property near Sligo. No one would dream of offering land at present, since tenders would probably fall several years' purchase short, even of the ludicrously low bids in Ulster and Leitrim.

Sligo has a splendid harbour; it is the natural outlet of five adjacent counties, and might do a great sea trade. There are 25 feet of water over the bar at high water. Large sums had long ago been expended on the port; and the Harbour Commissioners have laid out nearly £20,000 in the last two years. There are good quays, and steamers ply from them regularly to Glasgow and Liverpool. But the prosperity of Sligo might be in-

calculably developed, could the inland navigation be opened up. Lough Gill is navigable to the village of Drumahair, which is only ten miles from the navigable Lough Allen, whence the Shannon is navigable to the sea, being connected besides by canal with Dublin. For fifty years men have talked of canals or ship-railways across these ten miles of obstructive land, but as yet nothing has been done. Meanwhile, Sligo is importing coal, while there are extensive coal-mines on the shores of Lough Allen. There are also iron-mines in the same neighbourhood, which were being successfully worked some fifty years ago by an English company, when, the manager having been shot, the works were suspended.

Sligo, at the head of its bay, is prettily situated. Yet, were you merely to sleep there and then pass on, you would have no conception of the beauties of the neighbourhood. The two miles called the Garogue river that connect the bay with Lough Gill, are in reality only the narrowing lough. Owing to an audacious piece of trespass, for which I apologise, though I cannot regret it, I enjoyed a most delightful scramble with magnificent views. Acting on the directions of the hotel waiter, I reached a lodge gate on the bank of the river, whence I was summarily turned back. The woman said she would have admitted me "heart and hand," only that her orders were peremptory. I turned back, and tried the next road leading in the same direction. It led me into a mistake, or rather into a lane which ended at the side gate of a park. The prospects through the grating were so seductive that I pushed it open and passed in. I struck into an approach skirting the lough

—the narrowing channel winding through woods of Scotch firs and beeches was nearly choked by a little wooded island, with a great tree fallen over the water, the drooping limbs laden with trailing curtains of ivy. Going further, I struck out of the approach, across great green meadows sloping down from hanging coverts, carrying herds of sleek shorthorns and fat sheep, and divided by strongly built old park walls, the grey of these moss-grown walls chiming in harmoniously with the green. Here at least, besides the natural beauties, were all the signs of wealth and cultivated taste; while on the opposite bank was Mr Wynne's imposing mansion of Hazlewood, embowered in woods equally beautiful. I climbed the steep meadow-land before me, and from the crest of it saw the whole expanse of Lough Gill, stretching away towards the north. The scenery in the foreground somewhat resembled that of the Trossachs. One of the wooded islands might have been mistaken for Helen's Isle. I could not possibly have wandered to any spot which would show the scenery near Sligo to greater advantage. I saw enough, however, to be sure that the much-praised voyage up the lough is overrated. The upper end is sterile and comparatively tame, though there are still thriving plantations on the banks, and the mountains must always be visible in the distance. I saw, too, that the popular mode of admiring the lough from a boat—boatmen pester you in Sligo as persistently as beggars—must be a mistake, if one can do any better. From the surface of the water you can only see the scenery piecemeal, while from the eminence I stood upon you embrace the whole broad panorama of wood

and water and verdant meadows, of wild brown mountains and barren wastes. There is cultivation and high prosperity on the one hand, struggling poverty and sad sterility on the other—a picture of the state of Ireland as I have seen it.

VIII.

BALLINA, MAYO, *September* 3.

FROM Sligo to Ballina, a distance of thirty-seven Irish miles, I tried the four-wheeled public car, and had no reason to regret it. The shaking was considerable, but the pace was good; there was a moderate number of passengers, with no excess of luggage; and the company were intelligent and conversable. Between the seats on the four-wheeled car is a closed "well," as it is called, or long wooden sarcophagus, in which any number of small articles may be stowed away, and which easily swallows a bundle of salmon-rods. Above it the heavier luggage is piled up—it is well to get to leeward of that when the day is wet—and the whole is covered with waterproof tarpaulin. The team was a "unicorn," the harness of the simplest—consisting merely of headstalls and collars, traces and reins—and the driver urged the horses along with his voice, playing an accompaniment in the air with the cracks of his whip-thong. We sorely needed the tarpaulin covering, for flying showers swept across us in waterspouts, and nothing is more astounding to a stranger than the matter-of-fact way in which Irish travellers accept the rain.

The gentleman sitting next me wore nothing but a light overcoat; yet when the rain was splashing down under the close collar of my thick ulster of Irish frieze, he calmly continued his talk on philology, as if the skies had been still beaming down on us, as they were to beam again in another five minutes. The young lady on my other side, in a cloth jacket and straw hat, interposed a small umbrella between her and the storm; while a youth of literary tastes, who made the fourth on our side, was immersed in the pages of a yellow novel, reluctantly thrusting it into his pocket for a few minutes when the downpour threatened to obliterate the type. Those storm showers were disagreeable while they lasted, yet I scarcely regretted them when once they had gone by. The sun burst out, a steam rose from the passengers, and we had time to dry before we were drenched again; while the lights on land, sea, and sky were wonderful, more marvellously beautiful than those I had enjoyed on the showery drive from Killybegs to Donegal. The clouds are never so white as near the sea, and never have I seen their white brilliancy so intense, if I may use the expression, as near the Atlantic off western Ireland; while others that are rapidly rolling up in dark banks are of the deepest tints of violet and indigo. And from time to time the perfect arch of a rainbow spans sea and land for a dozen of leagues or so. There is a fantastic contrast, too, in the lights in the distance. There a hill-line is shrouded in grey, and the summits that had become familiar to me are blurred and undistinguishable; while there again, and miles further away, some mountain is brought near to you as if it were focused in a telescope. Probably I was thirty miles as the crow flies

from the precipitous sea-face of Slieve Liagh, near Carrick, yet I saw the cliffs as I should never have seen them had I boated round from Teelin on that rainy day when I was forced to seek a shelter at Killybegs. The green hills hanging over us were equally beautiful in their way, with the rain-drops sparkling and glancing from the grass-blades as if the showers had been scattering diamonds and emeralds.

Those storm effects made the drive singularly enjoyable, and I could only wonder that our English artists so seldom come hither for subjects and inspiration. We have any quantity of Scotch Highland landscapes at the Academy, *à la* Graham and Maculloch, but seldom or never a scene from the West of Ireland. Yet, after the first few miles, the road to Ballina becomes decidedly dull. There is little to redeem it but those magnificent Donegal cliffs and the round mountains near Westport, with the peak of Croagh Patrick rising in a fantastically coloured cloudland before us. After threading the bright plantations of young larches on Colonel Cooper's estate, we enter on a long wearisome waste of moorland, stretching backward to a ridge of grim low hills. Hovels are dotted about the peat-bogs, though here and there is a little oasis of better land, with a decent dwelling upon it, or a church, with its "glebe-house," or the habitation of the priest, surrounded by a thicket of trees. One of these "glebes" was pointed out to me as the residence of the late Mr Nangle, a Protestant divine of great force of character, and an uncompromising assailant of "Romish error." I mention him as a proof that the Catholics and their clergy may have more than toleration for an honest foe. I was told that Mr Nangle

was on excellent terms with the priests, and was liked and respected by his poor Catholic neighbours. We delivered newspapers along the road in most primitive fashion. They were flung down on the road or pitched over a gate into a garden, to be picked up sooner or later, according as the people heard the rattle of the mail-cart or no. One letter-box on the roadside struck me particularly. On a stone wall was about a wheelbarrowful of earth, thickly covered with sod, in which a hole had been excavated like the entrance to a rabbit-burrow. It is probable that the inmates of these hovels do not care to tamper with their neighbours' papers or correspondence. But it was a different thing when we pulled up to deliver some parcels at the handsome stone pillars of a lodgeless gate to a well-gravelled approach, leading for a mile or more through the desolate bog to a large and rather handsome cottage *ornée*. It puzzled me to surmise how so excellent a house came to be dropped in the midst of its depressing surroundings. Among the parcels were a couple of joints of meat; and sirloins of beef and legs of mutton must be strong temptations in those parts, where sharp-set and sharp-eyed *gossoons* go stalking hungrily about like so many hooded crows. "Put them on the pillar and lave them; nobody will stale them here," suggested one of our fellow-passengers, anxious to arrive at the end of his journey. But the driver, perhaps with a sense of his responsibilities, took more cynical views of human nature. "They won't stale them if they don't get the chance," he said; and it seemed that our drive might be delayed indefinitely, when, happily, a road-mender was descried in the distance, and he promised to have an

eye on the parcels "till some one should happen to come from the house." By the way, the road-maker's patronymic was Morrison, which leads me to remark again on the number of "foreign" names I have met with everywhere in western Ireland—that is to say, with the exception of the wild corner of northern Donegal at the back of the Bloody Foreland, where everybody is apparently either a M'Sweeney or a M'Fadden; and there no stranger could have felt tempted to settle, as he would surely and summarily have been disposed of if he had settled. The Scottish colonists of Ulster come down to Ballyshannon, and, so far, there is nothing surprising. At Sligo there are frequent Scotch names on the signboards, which may be explained by intermittent immigration from the Clyde, owing to the regular steam traffic. But all along the roads from Ballyshannon to Ballina I observed "Johnsons," "Walkers," "Robertsons," &c., constantly above doors, and generally above the doors of the most respectable houses; while the long-established and long-descended landed proprietors round Sligo—the Wynnes, the Gethins, the Gores, the Ormsbys, &c.—must either be pure Welsh or else from the Welsh marches. It is notorious, too, that many of the settlers took Irish names with Irish habits; but were Scotland, Wales, and England to claim their own, the genuine Milesians hereabouts might be found to be in an actual minority.

Some of the hills pretty thickly covered with heather looked as if they might be fair grouse-beats; and a gentleman on the car informed me that twenty years ago thirty brace was no unusual bag for two guns. But he added that nothing like that was to be done nowadays; and,

in fact, everywhere I have heard a similar story. Nor does it seem very easy to assign a reason, unless that poaching was active during the land agitation, and that the peasants often destroyed the eggs to spite the landlords. It was a bleak and wet country we were passing through, and I was the more surprised to see for the first time considerable numbers of turkeys. They were undersized, but the broods were numerous; yet the turkey is notoriously a delicate bird to rear, even with everything in the way of climate and feeding in its favour. Yesterday, again, as on the occasion of my drive into Sligo, we fell in with strings of people returning from the market. The difference in their appearance was just what I should have expected, after a survey of the desolation around and behind. In fact, these home-comings from market are a kind of review, in which the peasantry is paraded before the eyes of the passenger. You cannot possibly be greatly deceived, for you see the people at their best, yet ingenuously betraying their condition. Here we hardly met a single car. Here no money had been expended in new painting the rickety carts, which were overpacked with poorly dressed people, who had evidently owed a lift to the good-nature of neighbours. Nevertheless, a great many had to trudge on foot—a certain sign of extremity of poverty. There were weary women dragging themselves along behind their husbands, stopping occasionally to rest on the stones or to bathe their feet in the rivulets. Many of the horses and donkeys were wellnigh past work; almost all were miserably out of condition. In fact, as you travel round western Ireland, you find that it is quite impossible to generalise. In one district the people are more than

fairly well-to-do; in the next they are almost over the verge of destitution. In one parish the horses are well fed, in the next the ribs may be counted through the staring coat; and you see them dragging at the weather-soaked thatch, or even sniffing hungrily at the rushes on the peat-stacks. It seems to me, so far, that it is fundamentally a question of soil, and that the character of the landlords must be at least a secondary consideration. And as it is with the crofts or the farms, so it is with the hotels. I spoke my mind very freely in my last letter as to certain trying experiences in that respect, and Sligo is a far more important town than Ballina. But the Imperial Hotel in Ballina is all that the tourist need desire, and very much more than he dare expect. I found a landlord and a large house, lofty and handsomely furnished rooms that would do credit to a fashionable English watering-place, perfect cleanliness, smart attendance, comfortable fare with reasonable charges. To be sure, Ballina is a favourite fishing resort in the summer; and the stranger who comes to fish will certainly feel loath to leave it.

The well-known salmon fisheries are held in shares, of which the Misses Little own five-sevenths. The returns vary considerably from year to year, but the average value may be set down at £4000. The rod-fishing is free to all comers, but the anglers give up the fish they kill. The best of the season is from the third week of June to the end of July; and this year the sport has been indifferent. The most fortunate of the fishers only killed six fish in one day, while in 1883 the largest number was fifteen. Ballina strikes me as being a prosperous little place, though there is

the usual blending of the extremes of comfort and wretchedness. But there are some handsome houses; there are great mills above the broad river-fall, which is something between a rush and a cataract, and three imposing banking establishments in the main street within a few doors of each other. It used to import large quantities of corn to be ground in these mills; but the trade has declined during the last three years, and it is the same sad story one hears everywhere of the land agitation. Ballina, like almost all the sea-ports on this coast, is at a disadvantage, owing to the dangers of its bar. The steamers which touch at Sligo on their way to and from Glasgow are perpetually meeting with mishaps. And if a steamer comes off the port in a gale, there is nothing for it but to lie off and to be knocked about by the billows, or prudently to steam away from a lee shore so perilous. The bar might be improved, but then there are wheels within wheels. The owners of the salmon-fisheries oppose any harbour works, which must certainly impair the value of the fishings; and a slight resistance is sufficient to check enterprise, when capital, whether public or private, is so very hard to unlock. Even the landward communications are slow, primitive, and circuitous, though there is a railway to Dublin by way of Manulla Junction, where, apparently, there are always indefinite delays. But on the road to the excellent harbour of Sligo there are nothing but those public cars, which can only carry small packages. They talk of a horse-tramway, and are likely to go on talking about it. But between the car and the railway or even the tramway, there are the covered coaches and the carriers' carts and the capacious

goods waggons which still remain to be introduced. I am glad to say that considerable emigration has been going on from among the congested paupers in the neighbourhood. A painful process it must be; and to-day when the Westport train left the Ballina platform there were women wailing and shrieking and falling into hysterics, as they took leave of their relatives bound for America. But painful as the process is, it is the best thing for those people, since such desperate diseases demand painful remedies.

IX.

WESTPORT, MAYO, *September* 5.

WESTPORT is a Capua where the traveller may comfortably repose after the fatigues of long days of car-driving from the north before making a start for the wilds of Connemara. The Railway Hotel is a roomy establishment, with two regular *tables d'hôte*, a trim head-waiter in white necktie, good dinners, and satisfactory accommodation. Lying in a hollow among the woods at the head of Clew Bay, where Lever placed the seat of his Knight of Gwynne, the situation of Westport is simply enchanting. Of the town itself, perhaps the less said the better. Broad, roughly paved streets, with unprepossessing or ill-conditioned houses running up the sides of a steep hill, are crossed by other streets as broad but more dirty. But the hotel, the two banks, the Catholic Church, and other public buildings, look out on a wide boulevard that might have been borrowed from some quiet old Flemish city. Great poplars, ashes, and hornbeams almost interlace their boughs across a stream that flows between walls with high parapets over a channel paved with flagstones. And little more than a stone's-throw from the door of the

hotel is the great gate of the Marquis of Sligo's noble park of Westport. The domain has always been open to the public; drives and walks go winding under fine old trees, gradually converging towards either side of the narrowing sea-arm that flows up from Clew Bay almost to the terraces beneath the mansion. Westport House itself is an imposing residence, though somewhat cumbrous and Vanbrugh-like in its style of architecture, commanding from the western windows grand views down the bay. Within are good pictures and statues, with wonderful old oaken carvings. Strolling onwards under the shady avenues of the park, we emerge on Westport harbour, which is nearly a mile from the town. There are great blocks of warehouses, of which I shall have more to say; there is a broad causeway flanked towards the sea channel by quays, where some small coasting craft were lying at their moorings, with H.M. gunboat Wasp.[1] And crossing the causeway, we turn the corner of a little hill on to a promontory, whence the eye ranges far and wide around one of the grandest of marine panoramas.

Grand as it is, here is nothing compared to what may be seen on a clear day from the summit of the sacred hill of Croagh Patrick, which towers up with its sharp-pointed cone above Clew Bay to the south. And as I should like to give a good idea of sea scenery that is almost unparalleled, we may as well climb Croagh Patrick at once. The base is some four miles from Westport, and of course you go to it by car. The hill rises to a height of 2500 feet. Extricating ourselves from a mob of beggars, who pertinaciously urge on the stranger the

[1] Wrecked a few weeks afterwards on Tory Island.

virtues of the sacrament of almsgiving, and beginning with benedictions end with curses, we scale the slopes, passing sundry "stations." The ascent, though steep, is sufficiently easy till we get among the loose stones near the summit, where the pilgrims lacerate their naked feet. But the prospect amply compensates anything that is to be overcome in double-soled boots. Immediately beneath is the Bay of Clew, with its archipelago of literally innumerable islands—they are said to be as many as the days of the year—lying under the landward shores. Bay and islands seem equally green from above, but when among them the water in the channels is of the deepest and most translucid sapphire. Seen at sunset, what between the changing colours of the clouds and the seas, I have no doubt that Thackeray's metaphor of the tints of the dying dolphin must be singularly appropriate. Closing Clew Bay, some eighteen miles from the shore, and full in view of the windows of Westport House, is the grand rocky mountain that soars skywards out of Clare Island. Still further to the north stretches the island of Achill, with its mountains, that are loftier and more savagely precipitous. In the distance, to the north, under favourable circumstances, you may distinguish Slieve Liagh in Donegal; while to the southward, beyond the rugged and deeply indented coastline, are the Twelve Pins and other heights of Connemara. Nor less impressive is the seaward expanse of the Atlantic, with scarcely a sail, and no smoke of passing steamers to give a sense of traffic or life. Not to speak now of more distant excursions, that sketch may give some idea of the views to be enjoyed around Westport. You cannot mount a hill without meeting with

some fresh surprise; the variety in the outlines of the landscapes is endless. The glens and dells are densely wooded; and footpaths, with rude stone steps over the high stone walls, make Lord Sligo's woods everywhere accessible to the pedestrian. The sheltering mountains, the mild temperature, and the perpetual rains, clothe everything with the greenest and richest luxuriance. After driving along the wind-blown shores of Donegal and Sligo, it is like coming into another world—something like the descent from the snows of the Sierra Morena into the orange groves of Cordova and the valley of the Guadalquiver. One might suppose that so favoured a place should be actually swarming with visitors. So, I am told, it used to be five or six years ago. But, thanks to the land agitation and the general depression in Ireland, touring has terribly fallen off since then. One of the two hotels has been closed, and turned into a branch of the Bank of Ulster. This big Railway Hotel, with all its comforts, is scarcely half filled. Nor have I ever been in so accessible and so picturesque a spot where public communications and conveyances are so conspicuously wanting. The Midland Railway from Dublin drops you here; then you have to shift for yourself. There are no public carriages of any kind. Six years ago there were four-wheeled cars to Clifden and Letterfrack; six years ago they talked of organising regular steam trips round the Bay of Clew and to the Cliffs of Achill. They had really set those trips agoing. But strangers, very absurdly no doubt, shrunk from the idea of being shot in West Mayo; the steamers were withdrawn, and the cars ceased to run. Yet, with fair facilities for getting about, I have no hesitation in say-

ing that there could hardly be a more agreeable place of sojourn than Westport. The dripping climate is a drawback, no doubt, otherwise the environs of the little town would be an earthly paradise. A shower will plump down out of some treacherous fleecy cloud in the clearest sky. You stroll to the corner of the street while breakfast is getting ready, and you have to make a rush back to the shelter of the porch to escape a premature ducking.

There are magnificent distant excursions, the worst of them being that they are long and fatiguing, though, with favourable weather, they richly repay one. Thus the going to the Island of Achill, with its precipices, which are among the grandest in the world, involves a drive of twenty-eight Irish miles, and you can only return by the road by which you went. At three-fourths of the distance you come on what good authorities have pronounced the noblest of all the sea-views of Ireland. You are ferried across the narrow sound which divides the island from the mainland, and are met on landing by another car, which takes you to the Irish mission settlement of Dougort. There, in Sheridan's snug little inn, you find very tolerable accommodation. The host is a naturalist, and an intelligent man to boot. He will tell you of young seals caught and tamed, which he has secured by swimming into the recesses of the caverns. He will show specimens of eagles and other birds of prey; of sea-fowls, and especially of the rare northern diver. From the inn it is about a nine miles' drive to the mountain of the Croghan, and thence it is a two hours' climb to the top. From the Croghan you look down the sheer precipices to a depth of some 2000 feet. You will possibly have a sight of a troop of wild goats,

and the guide, who may probably be an ex-gamekeeper of the famous Captain Boycott, will point out the rifts in the rocks which are the eyries of the golden eagles; for if the eagles have deserted the cliffs of North Donegal, they still breed in the wilder precipices of Achill. Captain Boycott, I may mention, rented a farm here for many years, before removing to the interior of the county, where he was to stand sponsor to the infamous practice of "boycotting." Now, however, I am assured, thanks to a revulsion of popular feeling, that he is one of the most popular characters in his neighbourhood. Of the districts to the southward I shall say nothing here, as I hope to drive through Connemara on my way to Galway. But there is much wild and rugged scenery in the northern barony of Erris, and there is good fishing in the spring and autumn in some of the lovely lakes to the north-eastward, the shores of which are seldom trodden by a stranger's foot.

I remarked in a former letter that Irish scenery has been sadly neglected, and here is scenery enough to be *exploité* in all conscience. But even more serious is the neglect of agricultural capabilities. I find in an old report of the Board of Public Works that in the half of the barony of Erris there were 34,000 acres under tillage or pasture, while 184,000 acres of bog and mountain were "capable of being highly improved." Since that time, far from any reclamation having been undertaken, much arable land has been going out of cultivation, owing to distress, emigration, and other causes. As to Erris, I am informed by skilled agriculturists that there is seldom sufficient landfall to make drainage either cheap or easy. But that is by no means the case with

waste lands to the southward in Connemara, where the drainage presents no sort of difficulty. Capital judiciously invested, under a settled state of things, might enrich speculators, landlords, tenants, and the county of Mayo. But capital is scarce and shy. There are few roads in the meantime, and, strange as it may appear, profitable markets have been made more inaccessible than before by the opening of the Midland Railway. That may appear to be a paradox, but it is a melancholy fact, and unmistakable proofs of it are all around us.

Walk out of Lord Sligo's park to the port of Westport, and you are struck by one of the most extraordinary of sights. There are some beggars on the wharves, some loungers at the corners, and a half-dozen of men who may pleasantly be called labourers, leisurely unloading a light cart or two. But there are great blocks of many-storeyed warehouses which might be creditable to the London docks; and on the first of these is the date of 1783, with a venerable inscription of "Bonded Tea Warehouse." These ghastly relics of a bustling past, which may probably be haunted by the ghosts of long departed booking-clerks and supercargoes, are memorials of the prosperity of Westport when Mayo was isolated from Dublin. Then Westport was the sole outlet for the county, as of great districts in the counties adjacent. Shippers of native produce had to wait patiently on time and weather, so that two or three wealthy capitalists monopolised the whole of the trade. They bought up grain all over the country, which they gathered into their storehouses; while, like the man in the parable, they built those storehouses bigger and bigger. They laid in stocks of tea, and sugar, and tobacco, which they dis-

tributed to their customers over western Ireland. The initials on the oldest of these warehouses are those of a certain Mr Macdonald; but it was a Mr Patten who really created the prosperity of the place. As might be inferred from his name, he came from north-western Ulster. He bought up land and houses in Westport, and to this day his heirs are drawing the "head rents." Mr Patten's chief profits came from the contracts for supplying the English troops in the Peninsula. He contracted for consignments of oats and fodder. He seems to have been a specially "cute" man, as the Americans say; and a proof of that still lives in the popular memory. The Spaniards — for whom we professed to be making great sacrifices, though we were fighting our own battles all the time—declined to bate a *maravedo* of their duties in our favour. The cost of sending calicoes, &c., to the army was very great; so Mr Patten did up his grain in shirtings, and sold each corn sack to the British Government for a soldier's shirt. But it was even in the memory of not very old living men that the last of these great magazines were erected. Then came the railway to tap the trade. It reached Athlone, it stopped long at Claremorris, it came on to Castlebar, finally it arrived at Westport; and with each new stride in advance, the profits of Westport fell away. The fact is of no small significance, since it simply means that all the trade of Ireland is steadily drawn towards Dublin, either by the railways or by reliable lines of steam service. There is little steam traffic on the western coast, and what there is is most precarious. The harbour bars are dangerous; the roadsteads are unsafe; the coasting steamers that ply along these routes

may be indefinitely delayed by stress of weather. A small steamer bound for Westport lay up only last week for three days in Blacksod Bay, and a man expecting a cargo of coals may have to wait a month beyond the expected time for delivery. But notwithstanding the high railway charges, almost everything is sent eastward by rail or by steamers with deliveries that may be safely counted upon;—so that not only is Westport dying of a slow decay, but Waterford has been killing Limerick, while Cork is only saved by the extraordinary advantages of its harbour. Yet Westport still does a certain amount of trade, since it has its own wants to supply. It imports everything. It gets its wheat from Australia and California, for the Black Sea shippers have been undersold. It brings preserved meats from Australia—meat to West Ireland!—coals and groceries, woollens, even timber, from Glasgow. The Glasgow steamer, which is supposed to touch fortnightly, more often than not goes back in ballast. The few exports consist of some oats, some wool, some eggs, and a few head of cattle; so that Mayo with timber, wool, and any amount of water-power, is actually importing woollens and wood.

As regards the condition of the people here. Since the hard times of 1846, the population has thinned greatly; whole districts have been wellnigh depopulated. The deaths from distress must have been many; the emigration of forty years ago must have been great; for nowhere in Ireland do men marry so young or multiply so surely as in Mayo. It is nothing unusual for a youth to marry at nineteen, taking his bride home to his father's hovel. The old people grumble, but they give

in, and the family of paupers increases annually. So far as I can learn, there is nothing quite so bad here in the way of destitution as I heard of at Gweedore; yet the crofters depend almost as much on the English harvesting and the American remittances; while the inhabitants of the islands off the coast are barely removed from beggary. Take the life in Achill or in Clare Island as samples. In Achill many of the holdings are rented nearly as low as in Gweedore; many are at least as low as 15s. In Clare, as I am informed, things are still worse. The people gathered together into a village have only their scanty potato patches, and a commonty of hill grazing. The winds are so violent, and the weather is so inclement, that the wretched store cattle, even had they better pasturage, could scarcely put on flesh. When an Atlantic gale is blowing and the harvest is being brought home, it is hard to hold the oat-sheaves on the backs of the donkeys. In an autumn storm in 1882 all the crops at one place were blown bodily into the sea, and the people were to be seen boating and wading after them, fishing out the floating sheaves as they best could. It is comparatively recent since both islands changed owners. Clare belonged to the late Sir Samuel O'Malley. With his large estates on the mainland it came by foreclosure into possession of the Law Life Insurance Company of London—the same association which foreclosed on the Ballynahinch estates of the Martins in Connemara. Sir Samuel's estates, like those of the Martins, were sold some fifteen years ago to Mr Berridge, a brewer of London, to be subdivided and resold in lots about 1877. That sale was effected at twenty-one years' purchase; the purchasers were two gen-

tlemen resident at Westport, and Mr Sines, an Englishman and wool merchant. I have forgotten which of the three became possessor of Clare, but I believe it was one of the Westport gentlemen. I know, at all events, that Mr Sines bears a high character as a landlord. As for Achill, it was owned by the late Sir Richard O'Donnell, whose son has still an extensive estate on the northern shore of Clew Bay. Sir Richard, who fell into difficulties, was an easy and kindly landlord of the old school. In his time, Achill, though far more populous than now—it contains 46,000 acres, and the population at present is upwards of 5000—was nominally rented at £700. Sir Richard sold, in 1848, to three sets of people, besides a small estate bought by Lord Cavan. Mr Pike, an Englishman, had the southern third of the island: like Mr Smith of the Scilly Isles, he seems to have prided himself on figuring in the character of king, and was fond of offering free hospitality to his countrymen. Mr Weldon, of London, had the central division; while the northern fell to the Irish Church Missionary Society. That purchase was probably due to the influence of the Rev. Mr Nangle, to whom I alluded in a former letter, *apropos* to passing his glebe at Skreen. Mr Nangle had been in the habit of passing his holidays as a young man in Achill, and had come to take an interest in the people. It was chiefly under his direction that the little Protestant colony at Dougort was founded, with its neat houses, its inn, and a newspaper. It might have been presumed that the poor people would have profited by the change of ownership; and doubtless the new residents have done something to raise their condition. As a matter

of fact, the paternally managed O'Donnell estate had been bought for investment; and so great and general was the rise of rents that, after almost universal reductions of upwards of forty per cent in the courts, the rental, which was £700 before 1848, is still nearly £3000. How do the people manage to pay? Well, in the first place, the men go to the harvesting in southern England; our train from Manulla was crowded the other day with a body of them returning, and hardly a man of them carried so much as a bundle. In the second place, here too, and especially at Christmas time, remittances from America come pouring in. In the third place—and it is the first time I have heard of such a thing—the very women go over to Scotland for some months to look for work in the fields or the factories. There is a general exodus after the sowing of the spring crops, which are left to the care of the old people and the children. Neither from the islands nor from Westport is there much fishing; nor, though there are great quantities of cod and ling on the neighbouring banks, with occasional shoals of herring and mackerel in the bay, is that altogether the fault of the people. The boats are poor, and on this terribly exposed coast it is dangerous to venture far out to sea. And even an Englishman, who brought a steamer here fitted with nets and all other appliances, found that, notwithstanding his hauls, the venture did not pay, owing to the distance of the markets and the cost of the land carriage. But beyond the poverty-stricken natives of Achill is a lower depth still. Further to the north-east is an island, called, I think, Inishkea, where the people form an independent state of their own, and must be

pretty nearly heathens. There is a precisely similar condition of society on one of the islands in Sligo Bay. They acknowledge no landlord, they pay no rates, they elect a monarch of their own, and though a priest does come at intervals to confess, to marry, and to christen them, they have an idol they regularly worship and propitiate before their boats put out to sea. I assert all this on the authority of a Government inspector, who had seen the idol, though the fetish was carefully shrouded in sail-cloth. Once the eloquence of an indignant priest prevailed upon them to bury it. Unhappily, while still near the shore, his reverence was driven back upon it by a storm. The idol was immediately dug up and reinstated in its former place of honour.

I may mention that there have been other sales of land to Englishmen. Mr Birch thirty years ago bought the Ballycroy property in the barony of Erris, and has since sold or sublet a portion of it to Mr Clive, who has built a shooting-lodge, and, I am told, made a charming place. Sir Adam Bellingham also bought land there. And though the Erris folk are said to be a rough set, it is notable that these English gentlemen have had no annoyances and been exposed to no risks, which seems to show that land may be safely bought in the wildest districts when it is bought for sport or scenery rather than for investment. And talking of risks and annoyances, I may refer here to Lord Sligo's dealings with the late Captain Houston, as to which, as my readers may remember, Mrs Houston published an exciting narrative. About 1853 a territory of some sixteen square miles was cleared on the Mayo side of Killary Bay, nearly fourteen miles to the south of Westport. A large number of

crofters and squatters had been removed, and although many of these had been sent to America, others remained among their indignant neighbours and relations. These disturbances of previous tenants were, of course, no concern of Captain Houston, nor is Lord Sligo necessarily to be blamed, since probably the squatters were half starving. It may be conceived, however, that the venturesome Scotch stranger had really thrust his hands into a hornet's nest. Had he tried the venture after the Land League agitation, his life would not have been worth a day's purchase. It is significant of the changed feeling in the country that at that time neither he nor his Scotch shepherds met with anything more serious than annoyances. It is little wonder, however, that he had a heart-breaking struggle. The rent was £1000, or about 4½d. per hill acre; the lease was for ninety-nine years, with a break at thirty-three years, when the lessee had the option of withdrawing or of submitting to a rise of rental. When Captain Houston died two-thirds of the lands were left to his son, the remaining third to his widow. Mrs Houston sub-let to the brothers Mitchell; Mr Houston sub-let to a Mr Barber when six years were unexpired. Neither of those sub-tenants succeeded in making the grazings pay. I understand that Mr Houston has renewed the lease on modified terms; that he is buying stock, and purposes to farm the whole. Nor does it at all follow that a stranger should not succeed in farming here. Lord Lucan has an estate marching with those of Lord Sligo, and I believe that the wealthiest of Lord Lucan's tenants is a Scotchman, who has remuneratively sunk nearly £20,000 in improvements on a twenty-two years' lease.

To be sure, Lord Lucan is admitted to be one of the best landlords in the country, and it is said that the only men who abuse him are those who have had no dealings with him.

So much cannot be said for all his neighbours. It is neither my object nor intention to single out names of landlords for invidious remark; and, moreover, as things are mending here, it may be as well to let bygones be bygones. But there are large estates near Westport on which, as I am told, no tenant cared or dared to make improvements. It is said that the landlord never visited them except occasionally at rent-time; that the land agent only rode over the mountains to search out pretexts for raising the rents. On such estates, even more than on those that were merely highly rented, the Land Act has undoubtedly been of great benefit. The tenant values even a thirty per cent reduction less than the sense that his future improvements are secured to him. And on the mainland of Mayo, where the soil is good, he can generally live on the land if he have enough of it; while, owing to the emigration and the depopulation, holdings are being increased and consolidated. But bad as things have been over great districts here till comparatively the other day, they have been brightening in Mayo since the famine of 1846. For the first time, with the famine, the excessive congestion was relieved, and the "squireens" or "shoneens," as they were locally named, were swept away, who, with exorbitant rents and arbitrary exactions, were the merciless taskmasters of their hapless dependants. There have been other changes since 1846, and strong prejudices have been overcome. Then the starving people refused to taste

the "yallow meal," as they called it. They said it was poisonous, or, at the best, bred cholera. Now, as in Gweedore, the harvesters buy the Indian meal on credit to support their families during their absences. Then no crofter possessed a shilling of savings; now, I am informed by the agent of the Bank of Ireland, that not a few of the islanders who are apparently the poorest, thanks to English wages and American remittances, have placed considerable sums on deposit receipt. We are accustomed to regard the Irish as thriftless. So they often are; but this gentleman assures me that in his district, at least, Paddy is seldom tempted into extravagances by prosperity. He lives no better when he becomes relatively rich; he is still content with his short commons, nor does he add to the comforts of his bare hovel; and he is as slow to pay the rent as ever. He hoards up for marriage portions for his daughters, and, above all, to protect himself against the calamity of the poorhouse in old age, which suggests other remarkable facts as to altered views with regard to emigration. We fancy that the Irish, and the Irish women especially, are always loath to leave their country. I am informed, however—and the master of the Union is my informant—that there has been a positive rage for emigration. Many families have gone out at their own expense, or that of their friends; and the guardians have been compelled to refuse many candidates who were pressing for Government passages. For five-and-thirty years before 1883 there had been no emigration of any kind. In 1883 there were 371 people sent out by Government, while twice as many went on their own account. Five pounds were given for each, but when the emigrants

went to the far west of the United States that sum was found to be inadequate. In the autumn of 1883 it was raised to £6, £7, or £8, according to the distances the emigrants had to travel; and 411 Government passages have been taken this year already. But perhaps the most striking of the facts to which I referred is, that among the applicants for passages were labourers earning from 10s. to 15s. per week. The applications were so general that one of the largest employers of labour in Westport went to Dublin to protest against these well-paid men being helped. When asked why they were so ready to go, considering that they were so comfortably off at home, the reply was unanswerable: "True, we are very well off at present, but if we wait the workhouse is our certain doom." So that here, as in southern Donegal, much of the best blood of the country seems in course of being drained away. Cultivation is certainly suffering in the meantime, yet the exodus of bone and sinew is far from being an unmixed evil; for the drain is tending to that enlargement of holdings which must increase the prosperity of the families that remain. It is remarkable, too, that the emigration has gone on, and been growing, notwithstanding the opposition of the priests, who have been solemnly denouncing it from the altar, telling their flocks that it is better to save their souls in Holy Ireland than to hazard them for this world's goods among American heretics. Yet the power of religion, not to say superstition, is strong as ever. In the sacred month of August 7000 pilgrims have passed through Westport, many of them coming from great distances, on their way to the stations on Croagh Patrick. Only the other day the clergy solemnly approved the

ceremonies by performing a grand Mass on the summit. So enthusiastic are the pilgrims that, coming ill provided with food, they apply to be taken in at the workhouse for a couple of days, where they must break stones for their meals, after going barefoot over the stones on the mountain. Strictly speaking, the guardians should refuse to receive them; but popular feeling is too strong to be resisted, so the ratepayers bear their share of the expenses of the pilgrimages. St Patrick's blessed well, some miles to the southward of his mountain, is another favourite resort, whither the peasants come by cart-loads all through the summer, camping out in the open in all weathers for twenty-four hours, praying and telling their beads at intervals. Yet some of these genuinely pious people in 1881 burned two great barns full of cattle close to the town of Westport, the majority of those cattle being cows in calf.

X.

LEENANE, CONNEMARA, *September 7.*

TWO-THIRDS of the drive from Westport to Leenane are tame and uninteresting—at least after the backward views of Clew Bay have been blotted out by the range of Croagh Patrick. Then we enter upon a solitude which is pleasant to see, because man is not battling with impracticable nature. The cottages are few and far between; on the long stretches of hills is no sign of human habitation. For some eight miles on the Leenane side of Westport, we have entered on the country that was cleared by Lord Sligo and occupied by Captain Houston. Unquestionably it has been turned to the most profitable use. Almost to their summits the hills are clothed with verdure, though the rock will crop out here and there: there are what would be called rich "corries" in Scotland, and rivulets come trickling down the mountain-sides in little cascades, falling from shelf to shelf. We follow the swift course of the Errig river which flows down the strath; and above a picturesque bridge flung across the stream at Ashleigh the banks are thickly wooded with alders and natural birches. The Ashleigh salmon-fishings on the Errig and at the head

of the Killary estuary have been taken as a speculation by a Mr Leigh and another English gentleman. The river and the narrow estuary may be fished from the banks at a charge of 10s. a-day. The Ashleigh Hotel is prettily situated to the westward of a promontory covered with grass, and we only get a glimpse of the house by looking back after we have passed it. But to return to Mr Houston's hill farm, the grazings of its 15,000 acres extend far and wide over some of the most picturesque of the Connemara scenery. They stretch along the road from Westport and on either side of it, following the northern shore of the Killary sea-arm as far as Mulrey, which is the highest mountain in Connaught. Mr Houston's house lies up a valley to the north of the sound, near Delphi—the classically named hill residence of Lord Sligo, which the Sligo family bought from the Plunketts. Mr Houston, as I mentioned in my last letter, is busily employed in stocking his ground. He has been buying young beasts in the markets at £5 to £8, which ought to sell, should the markets rise again, after two years' feeding, at £15. But cattle have fallen greatly here as elsewhere; and bullocks of the Durham breed fattened in the lowlands, that a couple of years ago fetched as much as £20, will now command scarcely £15. Mr Houston has been purchasing black-faced sheep too; and surely nowhere can more delicately flavoured mutton be bred than on these Connemara hills. As there are no fences, I asked how he could guard against the sheep straying; and I was informed that he will engage no fewer than sixty caretakers. The greater part of these men are Irish; but they are superintended by skilled shepherds from Scotland, and

they are held responsible for their charges. If they cannot show the sheep, they are bound to produce the skin, or give a satisfactory explanation as to how the animal came to its end.

The inn at Leenane, on a loop of the Killary estuary, is charmingly situated, and excessively comfortable. Indeed this centre of the solitudes of Connemara is singularly well provided with hostelries; and anglers in search of sport and the picturesque will find an *embarras de richesse* in the way of accommodation. There is the inn at Ashleigh; there is this inn at Leenane; there is "The Recess," of no small renown, a few miles to the southward; close to "The Recess" is a good house at Glendalough; there is the inn at the little port of Letterfrack; and another most romantic old family mansion somewhat to the northward of the hill of Tullymore has been converted into a hotel by Mrs Blake of Rinvyle. All of these offer good fishing in the immediate neighbourhood; for all along this western coast there are tempting streams linking lakelets and larger loughs, up which there is a steady run of salmon and sea-trout. The best of the fishing is over for this season, the most taking time being in June, in July, and in the earlier half of August. As for the salmon netting of the Killary, which closed the other day, the water appeared to me most seductive; but during the present year the take has been poor everywhere, and many of the most profitable fishings have failed to pay their expenses. With regard to the very comfortable hotel at Leenane, the landlord, Mr M'Keown, lays himself out to tempt both fishermen and shooters. He has the right of fishing in many of the neighbouring streams and loughs,

and he rents 10,000 acres of shooting, where fair mixed bags may be got by hard walking. Thus this year, on the second day of the grouse-shooting, two very indifferent shots brought home seven brace of birds, with some hares, wounding several others besides, some of which were picked up subsequently. Leenane is admirable headquarters for many excursions in what the Lord-Lieutenant described, in answer to a local address, as "perhaps the most glorious scenery in all her Majesty's dominions."

It is within eight miles of the far-famed Pass of Kylemore, which well deserves the praises it has received. I drove thither yesterday to pass the pleasantest and one of the most interesting days I have enjoyed in the course of my tour. The weather was glorious, so were the mountains. At first the road, carried along the steep sides of the hills, skirts the southern shore of the Killary water, at a considerable height above it. The great green hills, belted below by the purple seaweed on the rocks that had been left bare by the receding tide, rise sheer out of the lough. In some places the lough seems scarcely broader than the Thames at Blackwall, and each turn of the road winding its way round the banks opened up new effects in the enchanting landscape. In duller weather the change would have been a melancholy one, as, leaving the lough behind us, we struck south-westwards across great peat-bogs. But with the sunshine and glancing lights and flitting shadows, there were something like smiles even on the sullen face of the peat-bogs; and after dragging up a rise, full in front of us towered the glorious mass of the mountains of the Twelve Pins. Wonderfully pictur-

esque in a savage variety of outline, the whole dozen of summits could be easily counted. Then we gradually lose sight of them, one by one, as the road sinks to the level of the long Lough of Kylemore. On the opposite bank is a shooting of Lord Ardilaun's, with a cheerful-looking white shooting-box on the edge of the water. Hitherto we have hardly seen a tree, but at the bottom of the upper lough, where the hills close in, the heights to the right begin to be clothed with graceful natural woods, sloping down into some thriving artificial plantations. These plantations mark the beginning of Mr Mitchell Henry's estate of Kylemore. Another turn or two and his eastern approach strikes off from the Letterfrock road. Anything more romantic it is difficult to imagine. To the right is the precipitous mountain, where the trees not only hang on somehow, but contrive to flourish luxuriantly, among the huge boulders of grey dark rock and the blooming patches of the purple heather; while to the left we soon look down upon the lower of the Kylemore loughs, the esplanade of the broad avenue being bordered by a magnificent fuchsia hedge in full flower. And before us, with its square towers and its battlements, seemingly buttressed by the precipices of the mountain behind, is the great Gothic edifice of Kylemore Castle. For superb views and commanding situation the site could not have been more happily chosen. It was the choice of the late Canon Wilberforce, who, after his conversion to the Church of Rome, settled down here in the wilds that he might labour for the good of the people. The cottage was let to Mr Henry, who, having fallen in love with the place, finally bought 13,000 acres of land from the

Blakes of Rinvyle. Perhaps it was the opportunities for improvement that tempted him as much as the beauties of the place; and I need not say that since then he has been an enormous benefactor to the neighbourhood. The castle alone must have cost immense sums; and it was not only built but fitted up almost entirely by Irish workmen. The gentleman who prepared the plans and directed the works must have been at least as much an engineer as an architect. In spite of a vast amount of hewing and blasting, he had to lay his foundations and arrange the apartments according to the levels of the impracticable rocks. You walk up a flight of stairs to the dining-room, each step being literally of rock, boarded over. You pass from block to block of the buildings by corridors and stairs that sorely task a stranger's bump of topography. And while the views from the three sides are magnificent, each window at the back looks into the cliffs across deep black chasms of a few feet in width. The artistic effect of the castle is excellent, the front façade being built of white granite, dressed at the Kingstown quarries, near Dublin, which is set in a framework of the native grey limestone. But what is most worth noting from an economical point of view is the interior. The oak ceilings, panellings, and staircases, carved with the utmost care and fitted with extreme nicety; the chimneypieces and the capitals of the hall columns of Connemara marble—all of them conceived with exquisite grace and fancy—were designed and executed, as I said, by native workmen, and by workmen from the neighbouring villages. Nor can anything show more conclusively of what the Irish are capable.

Equally suggestive in their way are Mr Henry's outdoor improvements. When he came to Kylemore, some twenty years ago, the land was nothing but undrained bog, with the exception of one little patch of reclamation, where Mr Eastwood, an Englishman, had settled after the famine. Now, there are bogs and bogs. Those in North Donegal are bottomless, and consequently worse than profitless, because, as I have said, they will swallow down any quantity of manure. The conditions for successful reclamation are the presence of limestone, with a subsoil of sand or gravel at a moderate depth. Then the stratum of the peat, as the people here express it, is "boiled" by the lime, and made marvellously productive. At Kylemore, with its wilderness of limestone hills, any amount of lime is available. The peat has a gravelly bottom, varying in depth from four feet, or even less, to twenty. As a rule, however, the bottom is speedily reached. The peat, when drained and limed, as the sponge is squeezed and warmed, will subside to about half of its previous depth; and I inquired whether excessive subsidence in certain places did not impair the efficiency of the drainage. I was told that it did not. Of course, the drainage is the first work to be undertaken, and by draining the steep sides of the hills into great trenches, or rather broad canals, which fall through what was formerly almost unwalkable snipe ground to the loch and the river, the hill pasturage is improved as the bog is reclaimed. Mr Henry has turned no less than 3000 bad acres into either rich grazing or productive arable land. Nowhere in Ireland have I seen finer crops of hay and oats, of turnips and mangold. What is, perhaps, even more to the purpose, Mr Henry's

tenants have been profiting by his example; they get what lime they want from sundry kilns on the property, and their crops on land borrowed from the bogs are at least as good as their landlord's. That in itself is a proof that such reclamation pays well; and Mr Henry informs me, that for himself he gets five per cent on his outlay. If his expenditure has been great, his returns are proportionate. For example, the average of his turnip crop is twenty-five tons to the acre; and whereas he used to fetch his hay from Westport, which is twenty-six miles away, he has raised 180 tons of his own this year. Since I came to Westport, and before I had visited Kylemore, it had struck me already that there might be more than I had fancied in the National proposals of transmigration. Wholesale emigration may be the only drastic, permanent remedy for distress in such sterile districts as those of northern Donegal; but in Mayo here, for example, there appears to be a vast extent of territory which would richly repay reclamation. It is absurd to talk of turning squatters and crofters on to the grazing lands of central and eastern Ireland—though doubtless these have increased disproportionately since the repeal of the Corn Laws—so long as there are hundreds of square miles of shallow-bottomed bog, with the necessary fertilising ingredients, available. The work cannot be undertaken by the landlords or by capitalists, even had the landlords money at command, or were capitalists willing to come forward. Such is the change of feeling since the land agitation, that Mr Henry could not now have attempted those most successful experiments of his. Unless in cases where the land is literally in the landlord's own occupation, or where some

remote range of hills is actually claimed in commonty by no one, the tenants would resent any encroachment on the grazings as they would resist it on their own crofts. But it would be another matter if any arrangements could be made by which peasants themselves might be set to improve the unprofitable. For though emigration from the overcrowded districts may be satisfactory in many ways, it must be remembered that there is one serious evil inseparable from it. Hardly a man of those who leave their native land but carries with him a bitter hatred of England, in which he is sure to educate his children; while each resident Irishman with a stake in the country has a direct interest in its tranquillity.

I have left myself but little space to speak of Mr Henry's home farms, which show the agriculturists in his neighbourhood the perfection of farming arrangements, with the latest and most economical improvements. There are the spacious cow-houses, with the long row of sleek milking cows—Alderneys and crosses with the Ayrshires and polled Angus—with the water led along in a stream below the mangers; the cemented silo-chambers, with their new patent presses—an ingenious adaptation of the screw coupling used on railways; and the tiny turbine wheel of twenty-four horse-power, which saws the wood, thrashes the oats, chops the straw and the roots, &c. But I must say one word of the beautiful gardens, with their vast extent of conservatories and forcing-houses—partly because they contrast so strangely with the stern scenery overhanging them; chiefly because they show, more strikingly than even the farming, what may be grown in a compound of the peat and the lime. All the garden plants grow in the

greatest luxuriance, and the only thing that detracts from their beauty is the battering of the violent Atlantic gales. I might say that there are miles of fuchsia hedges, which are planted everywhere from north to south, on the slopes, to shelter the flower-beds; and still more striking are the thick hedges of the glossy escalonia, which form most substantial fences. As for the beds of celery and other vegetables, they are sights to be seen. Especially noteworthy is the plan for heating the glass-houses, which is the patent of a Mr Cowan. A boiler is built into a great limekiln, with a saddle boiler adjusted on the top of it. Three-fourths of limestone are consumed to one-fourth of coal. Seventy barrels of lime are produced per week, while the saving of fuel is found to be £200 per annum, which, considering that Scotch coal costs only 12s. per ton at Letterfrack, gives some idea of the extent of Mr Henry's glass-houses. There is much more I might say, but I shall only add, with regard to Kylemore, that Mr Henry, after one or two failures, has been wonderfully successful in rearing pheasants. They lay freely in the thick coverts on the hillsides, beyond the reach of marauding crows, and are unusually large and brilliant in plumage. Also I may mention, as a "wrinkle" to pheasant-breeders, that he has found them to be specially fond of the prickly comfrey, chopped and sprinkled with Indian meal—a discovery which makes a material difference in the keeper's bills at the end of the feeding season.

Ireland is the country of strange contrasts, and as a companion picture to the prosperity at this palace in the wilderness, I may sketch the decline and eclipse of the

Martins. Every one has heard of the Martins of Connemara, and those rugged peaks and masses of the Twelve Pins are on the southern borders of their great property of Ballynahinch. It had eighty-three miles of indented sea-coast; there was said to be an avenue, twenty-four miles in length, leading from near the town of Galway to the castle, while for sixteen miles more the avenue was continued on the western side of the castle towards the sea. Thomas Barnewell Martin, M.P., was the last male of the race. He suffered for the sins of his father rather than his own. His father, Colonel Martin, had the tastes of the Irish gentlemen of his day, with the remarkable exception of being a total abstainer. He spent lavishly, and fought election after election. It was in his time, I believe, that the first sales were effected of lands in the immediate neighbourhood of Galway and in the town itself. His son fell in love with a great heiress; her father had made his money as a chandler; and he was so rich that he offered, if his daughter married the heir of Ballynahinch, to pay off every debt on the estate. Colonel Martin would not hear of so degrading a *mésalliance*, and succeeded in breaking off the match; whereupon young Tom enlisted as a common soldier, and carried a musket till his father bought him off. On the death of his father he came into the encumbrances, with a nominal rental of £16,000. Except that he also spent large sums in contested elections, no one has ever reproached him with extravagance. He was one of the kindest and most liberal of landlords; he lived much on his estates; and though he was afterwards guilty of the imprudence of marrying a lady without a shilling, though of family at

least as ancient as his own, it is generally said that had he lived he might have retrieved his fortunes. He had sold two portions of the property, one to a Mr Hudson, the other to another Englishman, and had paid off some of the most pressing debts; but he fell a victim to goodness of heart and to the interest he felt in his people. In the time of the famine the Union at Clifden was overcrowded, and many of the sick and half-starved tenants of Ballynahinch were lying on the straw in improvised hospitals. Martin hurried down to Connemara to look after his poor friends, caught the fever, and died at the age of fifty-five, leaving an only daughter as his heiress. After refusing more than one offer from men of great wealth, Miss Martin married a penniless cousin of her own. Creditors grew clamorous, and the Law Life Insurance Company, which held by far the lion's share of liabilities, forced on a sale in the Encumbered Estates Court. In these compulsory sales land usually went for little, and there were no bidders for that vast Connemara territory. The Law Life Company came forward and bought it for something like £60,000 less than the amount of their own claims. It is much of a mistake, by the way, to imagine that that system of sale was a cheap one, especially in a case like this. Each scrap of holding, each boundary line, each infinitesimal right of grazing or turbary, had to be surveyed, examined into, and reported upon by professional surveyors and engineers, who, in the excessive demand for their services, habitually charged almost fancy fees. The upshot was that the Ballynahinch estates went for a song, and as the price was altogether inadequate even to satisfy the creditors, the last of the Martins got

nothing at all. The unlucky lady embarked with her husband on an emigrant ship for America, to die in a New York hotel. About a dozen years ago the Law Life Company desired to dispose of the property. Arrangements which had been made with certain gentlemen promoting a land company had fallen through, owing to failure to pay up the instalments of the price. Mr Berridge came to the rescue, and ultimately became the purchaser of the 260,000 Ballynahinch acres for £260,000. He has done little to the estate since he bought it, and, I understand, would be very willing to re-sell, like so many landowners of longer standing. Though the castle was handsomely refurnished, he has never occupied it since the land troubles; and at this moment there is only a gamekeeper residing in the hospitable old home of the Martins of Connemara.

XI.

Cong, Mayo, *September* 9.

CONNEMARA scenery can never have been in greater beauty than on the night when I drove back from Kylemore to Leenane. The full moon dimmed the twinkle of the stars, scarcely a cloud was to be seen, not a breath of air was stirring, each summit stood out clear as at noonday, and the black shadows of the opposite mountains fell across the silvery loughs. Yet it was little of a surprise, though much of a disappointment, when I looked out next morning on a thick grey drizzle. Such sharp transitions in the weather are the rule rather than the exception here. The rain came down heavier and more heavily, and towards afternoon it was tumbling in torrents. But it is worse than idle waiting in the hope of improvement on the morrow, so I ordered round the car that was to take me to Cong. For the benefit of other travellers, I may mention how I manage to make myself pretty nearly weatherproof. I wear a heavy and thickly lined ulster of native Irish frieze, and as the rain is often chilly the warmth is comfortable. Though the ulster is warranted to throw off almost any amount of wet, to save the trouble of

drying in the inns over that is drawn an ordinary waterproof. With flax shooting-gaiters and a waterproof wrapper tucked in under double-soled boots, the rain can only penetrate at the neck, and hardly there unless it is blowing half a gale. The heavy wet of Connaught, even when you have it in excess, is unlike any I have met with elsewhere. Behind the falling sheets of water, the heavens keep lightening as if the day meant to clear up in another quarter of an hour—of which it has not the slightest intention. But the consequence is, that through the watery veils you may distinguish the mountains with sufficient plainness, though each of them is shrouded in diaphanous mists. And as a showery day shows the lights, the colours, and the shadows, so even a relentless downpour is not without its advantages. Hitherto I had been driving through the hill scenery after an unusually protracted drought; the streams in the valleys had shrivelled up, and the small hill-burns had run dry. Driving towards Lough Corrib, the whole country was surging, foaming, and murmuring with the rush and fall of rising waters. We followed the course of the river Maam through the bogs, always sweeping in a brown torrent round the corners, and often flooding the intervening haughs. It was fed from the hills by a thousand little tributaries, falling from shelf to shelf in creaming cascades. And the sides of the more distant of the hills seemed streaked in all directions by long white seams or scars, which were simply the water precipitating itself almost perpendicularly, till suddenly it plunged into a pool on a bit of flat behind some inequality, to pursue its course for a time out of sight, though sooner or later to reappear. The very ditches by the roadside had become

lively brooks, running along under a green fringe of ferns and flowerless foxgloves.

After a short, sharp climb from Leenane, we have crossed the lofty watershed; and the Maam, which we have been following, now helps to drain the vast watery basin of Lough Corrib. Sheep and cattle that have been driven down from the high grazings are standing huddled together in the valley bottom in piteous plight, often bogged half-way up to the hocks in swamp. They have been collected for the fair on next Monday at Leenane, and in this part of the valley are two or three large hill farmers, one of them owning nearly 250 cattle. Cattle have fallen, as I said, as well as the fleeces of the sheep; but the sheep themselves fetch fair prices—as much as 26s. or 27s. A little further, and we are among holdings of the smallest size, the cultivated patches dwindling as the hovels become more and more miserable, till things are almost at their worst near the bridge of Maam. Strange to say, the men are not extraordinarily poorly clad, but nowhere hitherto, not even near Gweedore, have I seen such deplorably dressed women. The ragged petticoat came barely below the naked knees, while over the head and the tattered gown that clung close to the person was a flimsy shawl, their only protection against the downpour that must long before have soaked them to the skin. Little girls in low thin frocks, and without even the shawls, were cowering under cover of the banks of peat as they looked after a couple of sheep or a cow. No wonder that the faces of these poor people were soured and sad, as they well might have been in much brighter weather. If agitation smoulders down where the tenants are pros-

perous, it must certainly find inflammable materials among a population like this—wretched and hopeless, bigoted and brutally ignorant. And so it does; for this is "Joyce's country," of infamous reputation for its outrages, undoubtedly the most blood-stained of the districts of Ireland—that of Bear, to the south of Kenmare Bay, ranking perhaps the next to it. Not many miles from Leenane, we passed a lane leading across to Maamtrasna and Lough Mask, which lies about eight miles away to the north-east among the mountains. We may take it as a proof of the recent improvement of the county, thanks to the strict enforcement of the Crimes Act, that a small temporary police barrack, erected at the corner of that lane, had been removed on the morning of that very day. We passed a string of carts carrying away planks, roofing, and furniture, under the escort of the late occupants of the barrack. They were falling back upon the posts near Maam bridge, beyond which I remarked an unusually good house of a couple of storeys in a singularly bleak situation. There being no sort of outbuildings to indicate a farm-steading, I asked to whom it belonged, and found that it was the central fortress of the police in these wilds, no fewer than fourteen men being quartered there. Even the upper windows were protected by loopholed iron plates against volleys of ball. A few miles further we came upon the little Mountmorres property, prettily planted, an *enclave* in the great estates of Lord Ardilaun. It was the property of the unfortunate Lord Mountmorres, and inquiring who occupied the house at present, I was told that it is also tenanted by policemen. In fact, no small number of men must be indispensable to picket and patrol even

the more habitable outskirts of that savage and inaccessible country. As near the Bloody Foreland, so here, the aborigines have scarcely been disturbed from time immemorial. Nine-tenths of them are said to bear the names of the ancient septs of the Joyces or the Coynes.

Even through rain and mists it was a magnificent view of the wild hydrography of Loughs Mask and Corrib, with the rugged neck of land that divides them, for the road climbs by zigzags to a great elevation. All around and beneath us are hills and promontories intercrossing and interlocking, through which we have glimpses of sheets of water lying between and beyond. Immediately below is the broad expanse of Lough Corrib, dotted about with its rocky or wooded islands. On one of the nearest of these, off the embouchure of the Maam, are the picturesque ruins of the historical fortress of Castle Kirk, reminding me somewhat of Kilchurn Castle on Loch Awe. All the country through which we have been passing since we left Leenane is unfit for human habitation; and we may read the consequences of its misappropriation in its record of outrages and crimes. Great part of it belongs to Lord Ardilaun, notoriously one of the most liberal landlords in Ireland; but when his lordship's father bought it, he had to take over the starving paupers with the land, and he could not get rid of them if he would. Thanks to emigration, they are thinning now, and a happy thing it is for all parties. Yet this wild valley is rich in the extreme, were it only turned to its natural uses. Nowhere have I seen finer grazing, and many of the cattle and the sheep were in high condition; and, with some judicious hill draining, we should say in Scotland that it was

magnificent ground for a first-class deer-forest. How far the deer would do well on these bare Connaught hills, in this west Irish damp, I do not know, and in any case the surrounding peasants would soon make short work of them.

Lord Mountmorres's house was made familiar to English people by many views in the illustrated papers at the time of the murder. With the little grass plot among its copses and shrubberies before it, with the six windows and the plain doorless front, it looks more like the residence of a second-rate Mid-Lothian farmer than of a nobleman, and assuredly has no aristocratic pretensions about it. Two miles on the Leenane side of Cong, my friendly driver turned up a side road for 150 yards. He pulled up before a gap in a loose stone wall which had evidently been recently repaired. Either by chance or designedly, the top stone in the breach was a small black slab, much like a tombstone in miniature; and that slab marks the spot whence the ruffians fired on their victim. And to have done with the melancholy list of outrages, I may remark that next day Mr Burke, Lord Ardilaun's agent, who resides in the neighbourhood of Cong, pointed from the high grounds in Ashford Park to a strangely beautiful scene among the lovely Lough Mask mountains. Where the summits rose on either side with the grandest effects, a mountain gradually fell away into a long promontory, seeming to stretch right across the lake glistening in the afternoon sun. "That," said Mr Burke, "is the point of Kilbride; up the valley among those high hills to the left is Maamtrasna; while the lough arm winding at the back of the promontory is Cloughbreck, where the

Huddies—the bailiffs who were sewn up in sacks—were thrown into the water by their murderers."

As for Cong, it is a mean village, very strikingly situated among barren rock, rich wood, and rushing waters. We enter it over a picturesque bridge; in the broad street, before the little inn, stands a venerable stone cross with an ancient inscription. But it is on passing out of the street at the upper end that we are struck by the full force of the contrasts. To the northward of the road there is nothing to be seen but hills and great boulders of the dark-grey limestone, huddled about in the wildest confusion, except where here and there they have been built into some unfinished stretch of wall; while on the other hand the road is actually overhung by the woods and flourishing young plantations of Lord Ardilaun, enclosing the park and the meadows of soft velvety turf. The road appears to divide desolation from extreme fertility; as the river which flows at right angles to it separates county Mayo from county Galway. In reality those appearances of desolation to the northward are somewhat deceptive. That wilderness of limestone rock extends for full six miles, to where the lands of Lord Ardilaun meet those of Lord Kilmaine. But if you mount any of the eminences and survey the district, you will see that everywhere in the dips and hollows patches of good pasturage are interspersed among the rocks. As for the richness on the opposite side of the road, there is no delusion as to that. There is marl as well as limestone in great profusion; so that the means of fertilising a naturally fine soil are available to any extent. Lord Ardilaun has employed them freely in his park and immediate

domains, though whether his outlay would have repaid a practical farmer is another question. That rocky isthmus to the north abounds in natural curiosities. The river that connects the two loughs burrows through a natural tunnel for three-fourths of its course, like the streams in the very similar formations of Carniola and Carinthia. Here, too, by shafts and holes opening into recesses and caverns, the visitor may observe the subterraneous flow of the stream. And there is an artificial object of interest at least as remarkable. Beyond the inn, and close by a huge and abandoned corn mill, are locks of the most massive masonry, in the bed of an almost completed canal. It was one of Government's great public works undertaken to employ the starving poor during the famine year. The canal was intended to link the loughs, and had actually been almost finished, when it was found, though somewhat late, that the elaborate scheme literally would not hold water. The water, in fact, drained away through flaws in the porous limestone. But the amount of money flung away everywhere in that famine time must have been extraordinary; and it seems to have been the exception when anything useful was finished. Thus, on the day when I drove from Belleek to Ballyshannon, I saw the remains of roads on either side of the Erne valley, and though they were green as the surrounding grazings, they could be traced at intervals along miles.

Ashford Castle is a noble pile of buildings in castellated style, partly of white granite, partly of the grey limestone. Here again, as at Kylemore, vast sums must have been expended, and the neighbourhood far and near must have benefited by those golden showers. Nor

has any one of the Ardilaun tenants, so far as I know, had cause to complain that his landlord has dealt hardly by him. Yet, on reliable information, precautions were taken for long against Ashford being blown up by American dynamiters; and it is suggestive of the character of the surrounding country, that the police never succeeded in laying their hands on these men, who, unless they were very admirably disguised, should have been conspicuous enough among the miserable peasants. Besides a force of police, Lord Ardilaun, when in residence, keeps a formidable body of retainers of his own under arms; and when he entertained the gentry of the county at a ball, revolvers were *de rigueur* as a part of the ball costume, though they were left in the cloak-room with the hats and overcoats. As for his lordship's land agent, till the other day he quartered four policemen in his backyard, and never stirred abroad without a couple in attendance. To the stranger it seems a delicate matter dispensing with that habitual guard, since the relative impunity with which outrages may be perpetrated is almost offering an invitation to them. But the district, as I have said, is become quieter in the meantime, and long familiarity with danger begins to breed indifference. Nor could anything be more peaceful than the scene in the Ashford grounds on Sunday afternoon, when parties of humble visitors, admitted freely by ticket, were turning up from all distances on foot or in cars. They lounge about the terraces, gazing up at the great mansion, which naturally struck them the most. For myself, I found the beauties of the park more attractive, with the herds of red and fallow deer grouped about under the trees, with the river running

through the lawns to Lough Corrib, entering by an estuary, where a smart steam yacht lay moored almost under the castle walls, and with the well-kept approaches winding through the woods. Between the park and the village are the picturesque remains of Cong Abbey, once famous for its wealth and for the richness of its sacred ornaments; so that money must have been æsthetically lavished in these wilds long before the golden days of the Guinnesses.

Lord Ardilaun now possesses some 15,000 acres in the neighbourhood. It was in 1852 that the late Sir Benjamin Guinness bought Ashford of Lord Oranmore as a small residential estate, being captivated by the extreme beauty of the spot, and intending merely to build a cottage *ornée*. In 1860 he added the adjacent Rosshill, sold to him by Lord Charlemont and Lord Leitrim, who had married the two Miss Berminghams, who were co-heiresses. Oddly enough, the next purchase in 1864 was also from co-heiresses—from the Misses Blake, nieces of the late Sir Valentine Blake. It was that of Doon, and the picturesquely situated island ruin of Castle Kirk is a part of it. I have not visited the Doon property, where there is a handsome shooting-lodge, but it is said to be as rich in natural attractions as Ashford. It was about the same time, I think, that 2000 of the most poverty-stricken of the acres which I passed through in the neighbourhood of Maam were acquired from Sir Richard O'Donnell, whom I mentioned in a letter from Westport as the former proprietor of Achill Island. Lastly, in 1870, the 6000 acres around the white shooting-lodge on the Lake of Kylemore were bought from Mr Finlay, a newspaper proprietor in Belfast, who had

himself purchased them not very long before from the D'Arcys of Clifden, one of the oldest of the old Mayo families. So here, at least, in comparatively recent times, not a few of the "good ould families" have been selling.

The average price of these lands was twenty years of the former rents; of course the rents since then have in many cases been considerably reduced. Lord Ardilaun has a great extent of his hill-grazing in his own hands—in fact pretty nearly the whole of the country between the bridge of Maam and Lough Mask, and in particular the entire estate of Rosshill—owing to large tenants becoming bankrupt and other causes. In the Scotch Highlands, where the same sort of thing has been going on to a great extent, it is a sad misfortune for the unfortunate lairds, owing to the fall in the prices of wool and mutton. In Ireland, on the contrary—and it marks the difference between the countries—Lord Ardilaun will probably have good cause for congratulation in the end, although he may be losing in the meantime. For the greatest possible recommendation in offering an Irish property now is that the landlord, in place of being a rent-charger living on tolerance among his tenants, should be the actual master of a part of his own lands, with the right to improve or to sublet as he pleases. That the security given by the Land Act for the tenants' improvements is an invaluable benefit to the country I can have no doubt. It does not affect the good landlords, while it binds the hands of the bad. But so far as I have seen, I am inclined to believe that fixity of tenure and free sale are far more questionable. At all events, I am sure that there are two sides to the question, and objections may

be plausibly urged—not only from the landlord's, but from the public point of view. Absenteeism has been one of the standing curses of Ireland. Is it calculated to encourage landlords to reside when they are not only curtailed of their privileges and pleasures, but discouraged from the work of improving a property which to all intents and purposes has passed out of their hands? A large land agent, with his great experience, has suggested another probable evil, which will directly affect the tenant. Hitherto when a farmer with a family died intestate, to avoid the evils of indefinite subdivision, the landlord had the right of selecting the successor. Now when there are, say, two or three sons and as many daughters, the question arises who shall come in? For the judicial rent fixes a judicial lease, governed by invariable conditions under the Act, which are not set forth in the covenants. Under these conditions subdivision is forbidden. The tenant-right on the death of an intestate is an asset which falls to be divided. It is surmised that in many cases the matter will begin with confusion and quarrels, which will lead inevitably to bad blood and blows. Then the relatives, turned enemies, will go to law, and low attorneys will reap a rich harvest. Though, after all, the lawyers can only advise a sale of the tenant-right and the farm-stocking as a preliminary to subdivision of the proceeds. But these practically forced sales will be the humble counterparts of the great estates flung away by the sales in the Encumbered Estates Courts, and all the beneficiaries will lose heavily. I give the idea for what it may be worth, but it appears to me that there is something in it.

XII.

GALWAY, *September* 10.

I SAW enough of Lough Corrib from the heights above Maam to know that the voyage from Cong to Galway must be most enjoyable in fine weather. Through a blinding drizzle there was nothing visible beyond the low-lying shores between the lake and the mountains. Here and there one could distinguish some shattered keep, standing out on a bold and defensible headland; and now and again there was the well-kept seat of some gentleman, with lawns sloping down to the water and surrounded by sheltering woods. But the prospects were as dreary as the day; the clouds, the rain, the rocks, and the lough, were all of the same neutral leaden tints. The steamer, though tolerably commodious, was a venerable boat, bearing the name of Eglinton, like one of the streets in Galway; from which I presume it had been launched when the host of the Eglinton tournament was her Majesty's representative in Ireland. Nevertheless, and although there was little in the scenery to admire, the voyage was not devoid of interest. Lough Corrib, the second of the Irish lakes in point of size, covering 30,000 Irish acres, seems on the maps to

form two broad expanses of water, connected in the middle by a narrow channel. In reality the navigation is intricate in the extreme; and though much had been done at one time by the Government with the idea of opening up inland navigation through Loughs Mask and Conn northward to Killala, the passage must always be impracticable in the darkness or in thick fogs. For miles the steamer, continually slackening speed, twisted and turned between the double line of grey piles of stone, or of whitewashed cairns surmounted by scarlet gridirons and beacons. Behind and between these were low limestone reefs or single slabs of stone, almost flush with the surface. Nor were these visible or half-invisible dangers the only ones. More than once, leaning over the side of the boat, I caught a glimpse, within a few feet, of a submerged block, barely covered by a couple of feet of water. That the old Eglinton has never come to signal grief, must be due to the skill and caution of her gallant commander, who, as I see, is about to be presented with a testimonial, which proves that the Galway folks are not ungrateful. Though I believe that the people along the shores occasionally go fishing, we saw not a single sail or boat; the only living creatures, except some screaming sea-gull, were the black cormorants sitting everywhere on the grey rocks, sullenly betaking themselves to a low heavy flight as they were scared by the plash of the steamer's paddles. Three miles from the town we entered the narrow Corrib river, connecting the lough with the Bay of Galway.

Galway, with a dwindling population which only a few years ago numbered 13,000, is a picturesque old town going quickly to decay. Yet it enjoys every

natural advantage, which ought to insure it a wealthy and busy vitality. The harbour, at slight expense, might be made the finest on the western coast; the waterflow from the vast reservoir of Lough Corrib, with its fall of 14 feet, might drive any amount of machinery. Galway has had a long and eventful history, and the remains of imposing buildings scattered about the poverty-stricken streets are so many melancholy memorials of former prosperity. It may be said to have been built by the English for the Irish. The founders of what still proudly styles itself "the City of the Tribes," were the English and Welsh chivalry, with their followers, who settled here when the place was stormed in the middle of the fifteenth century by De Burgh, the Earl of Ulster. "The Tribes," as they were contumeliously called by Cromwell's soldiers for the constancy with which they hung together, showing a united front to the army of the Parliament, were the Blakes, the Bodkins, the Lynches, the Frenches, &c., who, buying out or driving out the aboriginal proprietors, became the great land-owners of Galway county. Those families had made their fortunes chiefly in the Spanish trade, and to this day many of the houses, with their inner courtyards, bear unmistakable traces of the architecture the Spaniards borrowed from the Moors. The money that was made by shrewd and bold commercial dealings was squandered subsequently in riotous living by the descendants of the patrician merchants. The town was abandoned for the country, the trade died away, and, with few exceptions, the lands of those heavily embarrassed Galway families changed hands under forced sales in the Encumbered Estates Court.

Yet trade has revived again comparatively recently; and though the citizens are now lamenting their vanishing prosperity, at the first glance to the eye of a stranger there is a certain amount of bustle in the place. There are ships and a steamer or two unloading at the quays, there are blocks of great warehouses, which may be filled or empty, and the view from the bridge which carries the main street across the Corrib is picturesquely suggestive of the predominating industry. A rapid side stream meets the broad current of the main river; an enormous meal mill stands on the promontory between; while sundry similar establishments of nearly equal pretensions tower over the tops of the houses in the middle distance. In the backwater, between the double currents, an angler immersed almost to his waist is whipping out the small river-trout which are flinging themselves several feet out of the water around him. And between the bridge and the pool where he is cooling his legs, long narrow gardens run down to the river from the back of a row of ancient mansions, each garden having its own water-gate, with a flight of steps leading down to a landing-place. Until lately, there were seven or eight of these mills, all doing a flourishing business. Besides their staff of clerks, book-keepers, &c., they employed about three hundred ordinary hands. The wheat they ground was imported from all parts of the world, to be distributed through Galway to the adjacent country; but the times have changed with the arrival of enterprising intruders. Americans and Australians preferred to send flour in place of wheat, the flour in freight occupying only one-fourth of the bulk of the unground grain; while they did the grinding at home, and kept

what the trade calls the offal. The diminution in the home supplies of that offal alone has been a serious loss to the peasants and pig-breeders of the neighbourhood. Formerly they could buy it for 3s. 6d. per cwt. at any of the mills; now they must pay at least double the money. Moreover, the increasing importation of that foreign meal has been cutting the ground from under the feet of the mill-owners. One of them has closed his mill already, and the others are apprehensive that they will soon have to follow his example. Nor do they even compete for the purchase and distribution of the foreign importations, which seem to have been monopolised by the great Belfast house of Richardson, whose name I have read on enormous warehouses, not only here but in Ballina and Sligo. It might be presumed that the impending stoppage of these mills would be a black look-out for the poor people to whom they have hitherto given employment. But, strange to say, the demand for labour here has latterly been far in excess of the supply. I had an interesting conversation on the subject with Mr Harrison, the manager of a flourishing jute factory. Under very different circumstances this factory was started by a few local philanthropists thirteen years ago, mainly with the object of giving employment to the poor. It began with twenty-eight looms; now there are seventy, and it has become the second largest jute factory in Ireland. At that time daily wages were 10d., now they average 2s. 6d. At present the factory directors would gladly engage two hundred additional hands, which they find it impossible to obtain; and they have actually, though unsuccessfully, expostulated with the American emigration agents,

who are tempting their best young women to leave them. *Apropos* to the price of labour, I may mention that a gang of rather ruffianly dock labourers while ships are unloading frequently receive 7s. a day; while many more respectable men have regular occupation at 25s. and 30s. per week. At the jute factory, the wages of the workers, who are chiefly women, vary, strangely, according to temperament rather than skill. All that is needed is close attention to the looms, of which not a few of the girls are quite incapable. With one who watches assiduously, ever ready to take up a thread when it snaps, the machinery seldom stops, and she may earn a sovereign a-week; while her neighbour, whose eyes are anywhere or everywhere, may only receive six or seven shillings. The number of hands at work in the factory is 300; but it gives employment to nearly twice as many more out of doors, in the way of stitching sacks, &c. At first the speculation yielded handsome returns; now it barely pays 5 per cent on the small capital. But then it is still partially conducted on philanthropical principles, which will have to be abandoned sooner or later, if it is not to close its doors. Thus by the use of sewing-machines, which it has been trying on a small scale, it can do the work for tenpence which costs half-a-crown when done by hand. And untaxed foreign competition is telling against it as seriously as the rise in wages. Nine-tenths of the jute manufactured at home is disposed of in foreign markets. Russia and America have been the largest customers. But a sack which costs 6d. at Galway, pays 6½d. of dues on delivery at a Russian port; while the custom charges in America are even heavier.

Now that Galway is losing the advantage of cheap labour, the native Americans and the Russians begin to have it all their own way. The growing scarcity of labour is owing, of course, to the emigration which has been going on from Galway to an unparalleled extent. And here, for the first time, I have heard of a new aspect of the emigration question, and of the somewhat mysterious conditions under which it has been conducted. Besides the assisted and the independent emigration, with which we have become familiar, I hear of free-handed agents from America who make a secret of the parties for whom they are acting. They have taken up their quarters in the best hotels; they appear to have ample funds at their disposal; and they address their proposals promiscuously to all classes. They are said to have shipped many of the Connemara peasants; and when these poor people came up to embark for America, they had cast their rags, they were decently clothed, they carried bundles containing a change of dress, and had a trifle of money in their pockets. I inquired how the agents proposed to secure or recoup themselves for the outlay. I was told that they drew up formal contracts, which it was believed would "hold water" in the States, by which the emigrants bound themselves to their service for a certain number of years, or until the debts were discharged with interest. The employers of Galway complain that the Factories Act, limiting the hours of labour to fifty-six hours in the week, leads to a great deal of disadvantageous misrepresentation. The American agents dazzle the Irish workers by statements of the amounts that might be earned by labouring an indefinite time. And there have been cases of girls

going out and coming back, preferring shorter hours and the Saturday half-holiday to the high-pressure pace at which they were driven on the other side of the Atlantic. Indeed so great has been the emigration mania, that tradesmen have gone who were believed to be realising £3 per week.

And the contagion has even spread to the Galway fishermen—as characteristic, as prejudiced, and as home-loving a set of people as are to be met with anywhere. Still, true to their instincts, they have gone out in bands to settle down in little colonies of their own in New England. Here they have always occupied an isolated quarter, which is called the Claddagh. It has been the habit to set them down as of pure Spanish descent—although I can see nothing about them to support the theory. Their names are almost invariably English or Welsh, and in their appearance they are far more Saxon than either Spanish or Celtic. They used to live under an elective monarchy, and their king exercised nearly arbitrary authority; all disputes were referred to him, and his decisions were final. It would appear that time has abolished that form of government, and the change has not been for the better. Differences that were decided by the patriarch are fought out with fists and shillelahs. Hot partisans take part in the proceedings on either side, and in fact a free fight often rages through the settlement. It would be dangerous work for the police to interfere—the fishermen being hardy and stalwart men; the females are scarcely less muscular, and the village is as formidable a position as irregulars would care to defend. Streets of low, thatched, whitewashed cottages cross each other at all manner of

angles. Those streets are paved in a fashion, but the paving-stones can be easily picked up and converted into missiles. As for the cottages, though the quarters within may be cramped, they do not appear to be uncomfortable. Sometimes they have but a door with a single window; more often there is a small chamber on either side of the entry. When I visited the place great groups of the men were sitting on rough benches of drift-timber, chatting, smoking, or meditating in serene indifference to the soaking drizzle. Though foul weather, it was a fair enough fishing day; but that was nothing to the purpose. I am told that these Claddagh men will never put to sea so long as there is sufficient in the house to keep the pot boiling. Should they make a good haul on a Monday, they will lounge away the rest of the week. At the same time, they are the slaves of immemorial superstitions. There are unlucky days on which nothing will tempt them abroad, and of course they have a firm faith in signs and omens. They guard their rights of commonty on the sea as jealously as the squatters and bog-tenants look after the hill-grazings. Although in that instance they may have acted on more intelligible grounds, they have made the bay too hot for stranger trawlers—cutting the nets and injuring the gear. There are two or three small trawlers hailing from Galway, with which they have come to an amicable understanding, in consideration of receiving a royalty on the takes. They have still a fleet of nearly a hundred boats, ranging to about ten tons burden—though not many years ago, on favourable days, 500 or 600 craft would put to sea simultaneously. How they lived then by the sale of their fish—considering there were neither markets

nor communications—is a mystery. Then the fish were sold for next to nothing in Galway—a fine hake being given away for twopence. Now that the fish can be despatched to Dublin and other cities, a hake as heavy would cost 2s., and Galway is always wretchedly supplied. Yet in the meantime, like much of the improvable land, the fisheries of Galway must be left to lie fallow. As the Claddagh Corporation will tolerate no competition, so they set their faces against new-fangled innovations. When Mr Brady, the inspector of fisheries, would have supplied them with modern nets and boats, they stolidly reverted to their obsolete fashions. I may mention another trait related by a friend of mine. A particular rock being much in the way of the fishers, he collected £70 to have it blasted. Calling on some of the men for a few days' labour, they unanimously refused, unless he would agree to pay them regular wages. Needless to say that the money was returned to the subscribers, and the rock still remains as it was. A similar system of aggressive trades-unionship exists among the labourers on the wharves—which explains the occasional rate I referred to, when unloading has to be paid at 7s. a-day. Like the boatmen of the Rhone ports, their brethren of the Galway quays will tolerate the intrusion of no outsiders, and succeed in exacting the terms they demand.

But while the sea-fishings are more than half neglected, the salmon-fishings in the Corrib have become extremely profitable. The salmon swarm here; at the height of the running season they may be seen lying densely packed in the bed of the stream below the bridges. Till about twenty years ago, the netting was in the hands of the Rev. Mr Eyre of Cork, who then sold it for £5000

to Mr Ashworth of Manchester, a relative of Mr Bright. Mr Ashworth made a lucky bargain. Owing to extensive harbour improvements, which involved the construction of weirs and the cutting a deep trench in the Corrib channel, by which the salmon could run up in the driest seasons, the value of the fishings was so greatly raised, that on Mr Ashworth's death, ten years after his purchase, they were estimated at about £60,000. Nor is that surprising, considering that so many as 800 to 1000 fish have frequently been netted in a single day. Now the fishings belong to Mr Ashworth's son-in-law, who has taken another gentleman into partnership.

The port of Galway, even as it is, has the capacity for doing a first-class trade. One hundred and forty thousand pounds have been recently spent in deepening the channel and constructing a dock which could offer accommodation to the Allan liners, which come regularly into the roadstead once a fortnight through great part of the year. But the only important exports consist of the emigrants, whom the few employers of labour begin so sorely to miss. On an average each one of those Allan liners carries away about 250 souls, and I am credibly assured that in the last two years nearly 30,000 people must have sailed from this port of Galway. Otherwise the small trade is steadily diminishing; though, as I said, there are still considerable imports of flour and meal. Besides that, there is a service of goods steamers from Glasgow, which bring, as to Westport, the various stores and the coal for which western Ireland is absolutely dependent on Scotland. The trade, as I remarked in a former letter, is tending always towards the eastward; and Galway, with its exceptional natural

advantages, has lost all internal power of recovery. An old inhabitant informs me that forty years ago there were six or eight rich resident merchants who could hold their own with any capitalists in Dublin. All these men have disappeared, leaving no representatives behind them; and he tells me likewise that in those forty years not a single new firm of any consequence has started in business between Galway and Derry. Energy is paralysed, and enterprise has departed. It will be remembered that Mr Orrell Lever, then member for the town, made a strenuous effort to resuscitate it. He raised capital, he floated a company, and he started a line of Atlantic steam-packets. The enterprise failed speedily and signally. One vessel was nearly wrecked in the bay; another was burnt on the other side of the Atlantic. I believe it is a fact that the workmanship of vessels bought in a hurry had been scandalously scamped, and, of course, there were the usual rumours of foul play, with circumstantial charges against competing companies. Be that as it may, the shareholders were swamped; and the only memorial of the disastrous undertaking is the vast Railway Hotel in which I am now writing. Something like £40,000 was expended on it; the upper half is only half finished; and there is one unused grand saloon on the first floor in which the half of a regimental battalion might conveniently dine. I must add that the furnished part is very comfortable; and the best of the extremely lofty bedrooms are provided with every luxury. There is no reason now why a line of Transatlantic packets should not successfully establish a terminus in Galway Bay, which is the nearest roadstead to New York and Newfoundland, always

supposing that the capital could be found elsewhere, and that little co-operation were expected from the Galway people. There are but two obstructions in the open channel, and these could be cheaply removed since they are not even rock, but merely indurated clay, interspersed with boulders which could easily be blasted; while, by constructing a few hundred yards of artificial breakwater, the bay could be protected against south-western gales, and converted into a perfect harbour of refuge.

The decay of a once prosperous town has more than kept pace with the diminishing of the sea-traffic. Except for the signs of age that make ruin seem respectable, a walk about the principal streets leaves the impression of a city sacked and bombarded. Galway looks like Strasburg as I saw it immediately after Strasburg's capture by the Germans. There are roofless houses without end; there are abandoned tenements with shivered window-panes, or else with the doors and windows boarded up. Aristocratic mansions, with coats of arms and bishops' mitres on their sculptured façades, have been degraded into whisky shops and mean grocery stores. As for those great warehouses near the wharves, they are spectral in their desolation. But I happen to be able to give some figures which are more eloquent than any description can be. One warehouse, built thirty years ago for about £8000, has just been sold for £240, with £40 of ground-rent. The Galway Tramway Company—for there is a tramway here to the suburb of Salthill, near to which, by the way, is some of the most miserable land in the county—pays £50 per annum for premises with great ranges of stabling, which were erected at a

cost of £6000. Another immense warehouse, in the "most eligible situation," looking actually down upon the docks, sold the other day for £1400. And to finish a gloomy picture, throughout the neighbourhood for many a mile round residential properties are as much at a discount. Thus fourteen years ago, in a distance of fourteen miles along the road from Oughterard, there were no less than fourteen hospitable gentlemen's houses. At this moment, only one of these is kept open; and it is averred that five-sixths of the lands in county Galway are ready to be offered to any one who will make a reasonable bid. The holdings on the estates are generally small; the tenants are generally poor; the lean cattle are bought up by the Meath graziers to be fattened and forwarded to England; profits are small; payments of rent are backward and precarious; the people have few savings to transfer to banks; and as a logical consequence there have been outrages or disturbances, which make the position of the Galway landlords anything but enviable. Of course, there are exceptions among these landlords, and Colonel O'Hara of Lenaboy is one of them. He is chief director and half proprietor of the jute factory; he presides over the Harbour Board, he has done much for the interests of the place and for the poor, and enjoys a well-deserved popularity.

XIII.

ENNIS, CLARE, *September* 11.

BEFORE taking leave of Galway and the Connemara districts, I may allude to a proposed railway to be carried from the town of Galway to the coast at Clifden —in fact, through the whole length of the former estates of the Martins. I believe that the scheme is so far advanced that, having passed the preliminary stages, it is about to be submitted to the Privy Council. The land would be got cheap; the engineering, it is said, would not be difficult; the whole cost is estimated by various authorities at something between £200,000 and £300,000. It is fondly hoped that in a few years the line might yield a fair return on the capital. How that might be I cannot say; but for myself, I should doubt it. I have shown how trade has been dying away in these parts. I have dwelt on the draining of the flower of the population by emigration; and even if the country should be developed and the most be made of such insignificant ports as Clifden and Letterfrack, I cannot see whence a paying traffic is to be derived. Unless the charges are more reasonable than on some other Irish railways, probably sheep and cattle would

still be sent by road to all the local markets; and before there can be important consignments of fish, the habits and appliances of the coast fishermen must be revolutionised. But always supposing the money were to be found, such a line would be an infinite blessing to tourists; and if visitors could travel in comfortable railway carriages instead of in open cars, a Connemara Hotel Company might do a lucrative business. For undoubtedly the excessive damp of the climate, with precarious communications and primitive conveyances, are serious drawbacks to a successful and enjoyable tour. You might not shrink from a long weary drive, or even a wetting, were you pretty sure to be repaid in the end. But the traveller thinks twice before driving to some back-of-the-world destination merely to be tantalised by the presence of magnificent scenery which may be invisible in the rains and mists. I speak feelingly on the subject, for I had set my heart on seeing the Cliffs of Moher, the grandest objects on the grand coast of Clare. But the stars, or rather the rains, fought against me in their courses. For two days I had waited on in Galway in the most penetrating wet it was ever my misfortune to encounter. It was not that the rain was unusually heavy, but the atmosphere within and without was saturated with moisture. The great Railway Hotel is as solidly built a house as any in the three kingdoms, yet when I laid my hand on the balustrades of the staircase, they felt as if they had been newly washed. The newspapers on the tables were so damp that they might have been just dipped in a washing-tub. The ink still runs on the paper I am using now, though the sheets had been stowed away under clothes in a closed portmanteau.

In short, one might as well have been breathing in a hermetically sealed shower-bath; and as the weather clouds came washing up from the Atlantic, it would have been absurd to go in search of scenery on the shores of Clare. The third morning, however, broke with some watery sunshine, and on the chances of a brightening day I had made up my mind to go to Moher. The way from Galway to the popular little watering-place of Lisdoonvarna lies, in the first place, by steamer across the bay to Ballyvaughan on the Clare side. Otherwise one must make an interminable detour by road around the bottom of the bay. The boots, who is invariably consulted on such subjects in all Irish inns, spoke authoritatively as to the steamer's hour of departure; but, as it proved, the boots knew nothing about it. I have spoken before of the eagerness to volunteer false information among the lower orders, and had another example of it that very day. I had brought an introduction to a gentleman in Ennis, and asked the Ennis boots where the house was. He informed me that it was a mile out of the town, and promptly added, "But sure, sir, the gentleman is in the town at this very moment; it is not five minutes ago that I met him on the bridge." As it happened, the gentleman had left for Dublin the day before. So, my Galway counsellor having deceived me, and the weather beginning to dim again, I reluctantly gave up Moher and Lisdoonvarna to come on to Ennis by rail.

I the less regret having missed the Clare coast that I fear, so far as writing for others is concerned, these descriptions of rock scenery must become sadly monotonous. There are the same dizzy precipices, the same

vast expanse of sea, and the same rocky islands stretching along off the shore in the distances, which can much more easily be imagined than photographed by the pen. But I may give some reliable practical details at second hand, having conversed with many people who are familiar with the localities. Lisdoonvarna is now, perhaps, the most popular and fashionable watering-place in all the west. Though its chalybeate and ferruginous waters, and its magnesian springs, said to be sovereignly specific for many diseases, have been known for centuries, it has only sprung up into a favourite resort for visitors in the last sixteen years. Now there are five hotels, all fairly comfortable; but during the season they are so overcrowded that it is difficult for passing tourists to find rooms, which is to be regretted, as they are the best and most convenient quarters for awaiting favourable weather to visit the cliffs. The beginning of the cliff wall is some seven miles away. It runs for fully six miles along the coast southward to the Hag's Head: paths lead here and there up the rough landward slopes, covered with bent-grass, while parallel paths have been cut along the brink, protected on the sea side by parapets of slate slabs. The height is almost everywhere over 600 feet; and though there are far loftier precipices in Donegal and on Achill, the feature of these bulwarks of Clare is their long wall-like regularity. Besides, nowhere do the rollers of the Atlantic burst with more tremendous force; and the time to see Moher to advantage is in a storm or in the after ground-swell. In calm weather the correct thing is to coast round them in one of the frail coracles of the local fishermen. But you may have to wait long at Lisdoon-

varna for a really favourable day. Not even in Galway does it rain so persistently; for Lisdoonvarna lies in a little valley high among the hills, and those hills attract the rain-clouds from the Atlantic. There are no trees, there is scarcely any vegetation, and with the exception of the springs and lively society, the only fascination is the fresh dry air—when you can get it. Society, as I am told, is exceedingly gay there. Picnic parties are being perpetually arranged for the few fine days when the weather permits of them. The hotels are more than sufficiently cheerful within doors in the wet; and morose or misanthropic tourists might possibly object to the dances which are boisterously kept up to all hours of an evening.

Of a very different character is the district through which the railway passes from Galway to Ennis, and yet it is not without an interest of its own. There are fine views of Galway Bay, and afterwards of the Clare hills in the distance. But immediately on either side of the line is a dead flat, though, strange to say, there is scarcely a sign of a peat-bog: on the contrary, it is all limestone and rich soil. The general aspect is a wilderness of rough stone walls, enclosing an infinity of small irregular subdivisions. The walls seem to be built as much for the purpose of clearing off the stones as for separating the patches of different crofters. Stones are piled up in lofty cairns in the middle of the fields; stones crop up everywhere above the surface, so that the hay nook or the tiny oats patch seems to be three-fourths a stone quarry; the stone, as I am told, often lies within a few inches of the surface, though that scanty covering of soil may be nevertheless luxuriantly green. Nothing

can show more conclusively the quality of the land, or the excess of the moisture that makes such vegetation possible. Changing trains at Athenry for Ennis, we wait for a couple of hours; we always seem to be waiting at junctions here for hours, more or less. I went for a walk about the little town, and was exceedingly struck by what I saw. There is a wealth of stone in a waste of ruins. In the first place, there is a really fine old castle, the square keep, of imposing proportions, standing up in its grim isolation among rambling and formidable outworks, thickly overgrown with ivy, which still resist the ravages of time. In the second place, there are the remains of a venerable abbey, which are blended not inartistically with a handsome new parish church, the ancient buttresses and arches of the one being built into the brand-new walls of the other. While finally, and most remarkable of all, is the immense extent of the former fortifications of the township. Shattered but solid stone walls, still 14 to 20 feet in height, enclose a space which, being no land surveyor, I should estimate roughly at from 60 to 80 acres. And it must have been a strong and defensible fortification in its day, for there are still round towers with bartizans and loopholes at the angles, while a moat that encircles the whole *enceinte* could be easily flooded from the neighbouring river. The guide-books say little or nothing about Athenry, although it must evidently have had a history, and an eventful one. These comprehensive defences must have been meant to enclose pasture for the cattle in times of siege, and probably, as in our Border villages on the Tweed and under the Cheviots, a certain extent of arable "in field." And all along the

way to Ennis the solitary keeps standing roofless in the fields tell of feuds and forays and constant hard fighting.

Ennis is a quaint little town and a thriving one, though it must depend mainly for its prosperity on the agricultural produce of the neighbourhood. It was market-day when I arrived, and a good many pigs and some firkins of butter were changing hands. Though Ennis stands in a plain, there is much that is picturesque about it: there are bridges over a rapid river, shaded by leafy avenues; there is an old abbey, as at Athenry, mixed up with a modern church; there is a huge meal mill gone out of work; there is a staring new cathedral which must have cost a great deal of money—the magnificence of many of these modern ecclesiastical buildings may partly explain the poverty of the Irish peasantry; and there are many beautiful gentlemen's places in the vicinity. I walked out along a dull straight road over the level to one of the prettiest bits of lowland scenery I have seen in Ireland. The plain swelled gradually into soft low hills; the soil seemed to get the better of the rugged grey limestone, though everywhere were striking conglomerations of rocks. Fat cattle, Durhams or shorthorns, were feeding or being milked on the rich sloping meadows; luxuriant woods crowned the slopes and overhung the road. This very attractive place was not inappropriately named Edenvale, and were I not afraid of insulting this county, under cover of a compliment, I should say Edenvale was genuinely English. It reminded me much of some of the seats upon the moors in the most picturesque districts of the West Riding of Yorkshire.

I found on inquiry that my first impressions had not deceived me as to the fertility of that stony land. The county of Clare must be one of the most remarkable pastoral districts in the world—anywhere at least to the westward of Syria. Great part of it is occupied chiefly by graziers, and their flocks appear to fatten on the rocks. There is the country of Burrin, for example, in which are Lisdoonvarna and the Cliffs of Moher. The westward incline is towards the Atlantic, and looking upwards from the side of the sea nothing but grey rock is to be seen. It was of Burrin that the Dutchman De Ginkel satirically remarked that there was neither water enough to drown a man, nor wood enough to hang him, nor earth enough to bury him. Had William's general surveyed it from the eastern heights, he would have looked down upon a vegetation as rich as anything in his native polders, and infinitely sweeter. The pasture in these parts of Burrin, with all the stones thrown in, lets for from £2, 10s. to £3 the Irish acre. On a beautiful estate of the Misses O'Brien, with a most unpronounceable name, the maidenhair flourishes in clefts of the rocks that are actually splashed by the spray of the ocean. Land elsewhere may be less valuable, but that blending of rocks and grass is the general character of the country. The best districts of Clare are populated by graziers, dairy farms being rather the exception. The cattle are left out of doors through the winter; and according as grazings are more or less suited for "winterage," they fetch more or less rent. The innumerable stone fences in themselves offer a certain shelter; and besides, all sorts of trees and bushes are encouraged, to the leeward of which the storm-beaten

beasts may take refuge. Here and there are high, thick, straggling hedgerows; sometimes there is a clump of timber in the corner of a field; and constantly among the loosely piled cairns I have described, stunted thorn-trees flourish in matted luxuriance. The cattle when fattened are sent to the October fair at Ballinasloe, where they are bought up by the Meath graziers; or buyers come in quest of them to the spring fairs at Ennis. Generally they are sold as three-year-olds, when they may fetch from £15 to £18, having been bought as yearlings from £8 to £11 from the smaller dairy farmers in Limerick and elsewhere. It is obvious from these figures that the profits must be small; and indeed I am assured on good authority that the profits are very nearly nothing. The people must turn their land to some use, and so they go on feeding in faith, hoping for a speedy turn in their favour. But they breed excellent sheep as well, and with the sheep at present they are doing far better. Feeding cattle as they do, their holdings are comparatively extensive. The larger men rent from 300 to 500 acres, while the smallest have seldom less than 40. Before the famine of 1848 this part of the county was overcrowded like so many others; but after that time it was cleared by deaths, distress, emigration, and evictions, very much to the subsequent benefit both of tenants and landlords.

There have been no very considerable reductions of rent by the Land Court Commissioners; and here, on these purely grazing estates, the question of improvements can hardly have been prominent. There have been no great reductions of rent, except near Kilrush, on the north of the Shannon estuary, where are what

are called the "cut-away bogs." These are bogs which have been made arable, or rather have become arable, on the converse of Mr Mitchell Henry's system at Kylemore. In place of enriching peat, bottomed at a moderate depth, by sand or gravel, the pure peat has been removed by the natural process of turf-cutting, leaving good agricultural soil beneath. These cut-away bogs are said to produce about the best oats, potatoes, and roots in the county. As they were made available by the self-acting process of being laid bare, tenants had spent little or nothing on reclamation. They were never believed to be excessively rented; and yet for some reason or another, the Land Commissioners have been reducing generously around Kilrush. Notwithstanding the unsatisfactory state of the cattle markets, the people generally are more than fairly well off. Until the land agitation, and while cattle were still selling well, they had been saving money, and accumulating in the banks. Even now, though they have rarely added to their deposits, they manage to pay their way and hold their own. It is a very significant trait of the Irish character, that rather than break in upon a deposit receipt they will draw a two or three months' bill; just as in the ignorant old times before 1848 they would pledge a £10 note for a few shillings in preference to changing it. And in drawing a bill they are always accommodated by neighbours, who look for similar accommodation in turn, so that if the tenants lose by their superstition, the banks are the gainers. Nowhere has there been more agitation than here, and Clare was the first county to return a Parnellite member. But here the rule holds good which I have remarked

everywhere, that the agitation has only laid hold of the poorest. It was confined almost entirely to the smaller crofters who cannot afford to have grazings at all, and who were naturally jealous of the prosperity of their neighbours. And in Clare, as I am informed, men are straitened in their circumstances now who would have considered themselves wealthy thirty or forty years ago. Wages, where wages are paid, are far higher; the crofters have larger holdings and make more by them. But it is the people themselves to a certain extent, and in the next place the shopkeepers, who profit. The landlords have as much trouble as before in collecting the smaller of their reduced rents. The people dress better and they feed far better. In place of never tasting meat at all, many of the lesser graziers have it many days in the week. That better living may be so far a gain, but they are become extravagant according to their means and station. I had remarked myself, through the whole course of my tour, even in the wilds of Donegal and the mountains near Lough Mask, that the old caubeen—the tall battered hat—and the long ragged fly-away coat in which the Irishman is still depicted in our comic papers, have disappeared altogether. The women may be attired wretchedly enough, but the men, though sometimes tattered, wear the same style of clothes as you see on the English labourer or artisan. Yet, take it all in all, I repeat that the people here are prosperous, and might be more so were they more frugal, more intelligent, and more enterprising. They are careless and stupid from the agricultural point of view, and will stick in the old grooves. Thus, there is no reason why, where they take to dairy-farming, they

should not send first-class butter to market; as a rule, however, the butter is always inferior, so it is bought up cheap by speculators for Manchester and the Channel ports. And as the people are prosperous but rather wasteful, so the town of Ennis is flourishing. As I supposed, it makes its money directly or indirectly by agricultural or pastoral produce; local dealers buy the butter for distribution; cattle are freely sold in the spring, and pigs find a ready market with the agents of the Limerick buyers. But Ennis is also the centre of a number of small towns, all of which it supplies with goods of all kinds, which explains the show made by the competing shops and the brisk business they are evidently transacting.

XIV.

LIMERICK, *September* 13.

AFTER passing through decaying or poverty-stricken towns, where the streets are either mean and bare, or where rather dilapidated houses seem to have been flung about anyhow, it is a pleasure making a cheerful entry into Limerick. Not that Limerick has not its miserable quarters, where rags, dirt, and vice are conspicuously displayed between the den-like dwellings and the filthy gutters; but the main street, which touches on the Shannon at the eastern end, is among the best-built provincial thoroughfares in the kingdom; while the Shannon itself is a noble stream, bordered on the southern bank by broad wharves and spanned by sundry handsome bridges. At the "West end" are other fairly good streets, with a prettily laid-out public garden. The Royal Hotel is tolerably comfortable, with a civil, intelligent, and bustling landlord, who, having lately taken it, will probably improve the attendance,—and it has several competitors of promising appearance. From the front windows of the "Royal" there is a delightful view up the river, shut in to the north-eastward by the round green hills of Clare. At the northern end of the

bridge, which breaks the prospect, supported on a pedestal, is the rough block of stone on which the memorable "Treaty of Limerick" was signed *al fresco.* Close to that bridge are the Cathedral and the Castle. Thackeray in his 'Sketch Book' abuses the former and admires the latter. With all deference to the great novelist's impressions, I can only say that the square grey cathedral tower is a most picturesque object from many points of the city, while the look-out from the garden and graveyard in the precincts opens a fine panorama down the course of the Shannon. As for the body of the cathedral, it is so blocked up by trees and houses that you can only criticise it from immediately beneath the windows, so that it counts for little in the general effects; while the grey circular towers of the castle, rent and mended again with red new bricks, show like the roughly patched seat of an Irish gossoon's ragged breeches, and embrace the hideous mass of the modern barracks, like a tattered baldrick of the olden time buckled round the cast tunic of a linesman. What is more striking to the stranger, perhaps, than this imposing leading thoroughfare, are the exceedingly handsome shops therein. So far as these shops are concerned, capital must have been liberally laid out. For example, just over the way from the hotel is the great upholstery and haberdashery magazine of Cannock & Co., with its many-storeyed façade, with its liveried attendant in waiting at the doors, with cars and open vehicles pulling up continually, and with its own gaily varnished covered carts to carry the parcels about among its customers. That is only one great shop among many: frontages being cheap, there is ample elbow-room, and the fitting up and the

furnishing would often do credit to Regent Street. There are a couple of chemists, next door to each other, with sumptuous establishments that might apparently physic the whole of Munster; and there are at least two or three enormous groceries and Italian warehouses, which, I am told, do an immense wholesale business among small shopkeepers in the province. In fact, Limerick, like Clare, is a distributing centre for the surrounding districts, though on a much more extensive scale.

But Limerick does something more than distribute, and has steady-going flourishing industries of its own. As at Galway, the most conspicuous of the public buildings are the enormous meal mills. One is rather a striking object in the neighbourhood of the castle and cathedral; three others stand side by side, in great walled enclosures, facing the wharves and the docks; and they have *succursales* standing in the suburbs or on the upper course of the Shannon. But while Galway millers have been gradually going to the wall, those of Limerick still manage to hold their own against American and Australian flour importers. The secret is that they have energy as well as capital. Small mill-owners who cling to their primitive appliances must close their doors sooner or later. But the Limerick men have taken to grinding by steam-power,—and some of them, like the Messrs Ballantyne, have just been introducing the latest improvements in machinery; so that grain is still shipped to the Shannon, and there is little importation of foreign flour. The Spaights, who do not grind, are said to be the largest of the consignees; but the business of the Messrs Russell is perhaps the most

noteworthy, for they not only grind the flour, but bake it into bread. They stick to a quiet, old-fashioned home-trade, they distribute bread to Limerick and the neighbourhood, and they have agents in many of the towns of the west who have subsidiary bakeries attached to their flour-stores. Next in importance to the grinding and baking comes the curing of hams and bacon. The houses of the Mathiesons, the Shaws, and the Dennys offer a ready market for pigs from the country, and nearly 7000 animals are slaughtered weekly. These houses carry on a large Irish trade, and the surplus hams or sides of bacon are consigned to London or Liverpool. It was at Limerick that Sir Peter Tait started his army clothing establishment, which in his time employed 600 workpeople. The undertaking, after changing hands more than once, is still carried on, though on a less extensive scale. As for the Limerick lace, it is now made in a very small way by a few hand-workers; but the Limerick gloves, that once had a great reputation, are as much things of the past as mailed gauntlets.

The wharves are spacious enough, and there is a dock of considerable size; but there are few signs of life or of business to be seen on the river-banks, except when the workmen are pouring out of the steam-mills. The Shannon is accessible to ships of heavy burden at high tides, when there are from 18 feet to 20 feet of water; at spring-tides there are 22 feet. But the approach through winding channels would appear to be difficult and decidedly dangerous. At least yesterday I saw, only a quarter of a mile below the dock, a great full-rigged grain ship of something like 1800 tons, driven up high and dry on the right bank. She had swung

round and run aground while being towed up the day before; they said it was a Limerick pilot who was in fault, but there she will lie till the spring-tide floats her. And the ferryman who pulled me across the stream pointed to the boilers of a large steamer which had been wrecked a few months ago about fourteen miles further down the river. That was probably in the vicinity of the Cock Rock, an obstruction which it has been repeatedly proposed to remove, though I am informed that the rock is not so much dangerous in itself as on account of the mud banks which silt up behind it. The Shannon folk do not appear to care for a sea-faring life, and Limerick seems to have no vessels of its own. There is a weekly line of steamers to Glasgow, and a fortnightly line to Liverpool; but they carry no passengers, because no travellers care to go by them. Emigration from Limerick and Tipperary counties is directed overland to Kingstown and other ports to the eastward. As usual, the Scotch steamers bring coal, sugars, groceries, cottons, and woollens; and, as usual, they must often go back in ballast. The whole of the grain is brought here in foreign bottoms. Strolling down the quays and round the docks, I saw ships from California, New England, and Nova Scotia, but none hailing from Irish ports, except one or two small coasting hookers.

But if the middle classes here are thriving, and though there are many considerable employers of labour at good wages, it is evident that there is a great deal of destitution. I have spoken of the sad sights to be seen in what is called the Irish quarter, and I was much struck by the number of deplorable objects to be met with in the main streets. In the great English cities rags and

wretchedness generally slink away into the lanes and back slums; here they have no hesitation in exposing their sores in the sunshine. There are no great number of professional beggars,—in fact regular mendicancy with the professional whine is the exception everywhere now, and is almost monopolised by a few old women in extreme decrepitude verging on idiocy. But in Limerick you come across old men and women and sickly weaklings at every corner, who can hardly hold body and soul together, and whose tatters are disgraceful if not indecent. Possibly these deplorable objects are the more remarked here, that the town in which they starve is exceptionally gay and handsome. And the town finds good and profitable customers in the farmers and peasants, who are generally prosperous, as they ought to be. Indeed the district around Limerick is one of the richest in Ireland. Coming southward from Ennis, the stones gradually disappear till they are seemingly no more than sufficient to build the fences. Driving out to-day to the charming suburban village of Corbally, situated about a mile away on the Upper Shannon, nothing could be finer than the belated hay-crops. Overloaded hay-carts blocked the narrow road that ran between the double walls of a succession of well-timbered and beautifully kept gentlemen's grounds. There were enormous hay-ricks in each neat little homesteading; and in the fields, where the grass had been left for pasture, it was growing rank in the hedgerows, where the cattle had spared it. As in the country round Ennis, the chief occupation is dairy-farming and fattening; but here the dairy-farming is decidedly in the ascendant. The people have taken to selling the milk to companies which make a business of

preserving and consolidating it. That pays them better; it saves trouble, and avoids the hazards from sudden fluctuations in prices, as the buyers contract for definite periods. What would only fetch £3 in the shape of a firkin of butter, sells for £4 to these large contractors. No doubt the butter firkin should command a higher price; but here, as near Ennis, the system of buttermaking is bad. All that is produced is bought up by local Limerick dealers. The farmers' holdings average sixty acres; and these sixty acres will carry sixteen milk cows, besides a score or so of sheep. And here the "winterage," to which I alluded in my last letter, is a regular source of profit to farmers favoured in situation. Their neighbours who have neither good shelter nor a sufficiency of winter fodder, board out the beasts for the four or five winter months. I said that near Ennis the times had been somewhat unfavourable for the last five years. Here, until the year before this, the seasons had been tolerably good and prices excellent, and the farmers had been saving money. Within the last twelve months, however, the prices of cattle have fallen considerably. The fall has been partly owing to causes operating generally, partly to local reaction from fancy prices. The land agitation a few years ago had deplenished the grazings. Farmers who were persuaded to "hold the rents" had sold the herds that might be seized, or saw them sold up by the sheriff. The time came when they must re-stock the lands, and they all rushed into the markets. Landlords with boycotted farms, to be likewise replenished, were bidding against them, and prices rose extravagantly. Since then, with Government restrictions hampering the cattle trade, there has been a positive glut; and at

present, men who are forced to sell must submit to sacrifices. Besides, recalcitrant tenants have had their arrears to pay up, and to liquidate law expenses into the bargain. This autumn they have what they describe as a short but healthy harvest, and much depends on the coming winter. Should the winter be open and mild, their short stocks of fodder may see them through; should the winter unhappily be severe, they must either buy fodder or sacrifice their beasts. At this moment many of them are feeding at a loss, and all the men who can afford it are holding back in hope of better prices. Were there a forced stampede to sell, the consequences would be very serious. The district being generally prosperous — according to the theory which I have been satisfactorily working out, alike by inquiry and observation — there have been few or no disturbances. The reductions of rent, which have averaged about twenty per cent, have no doubt given substantial relief. The only part where there were serious troubles was on a property of Lord Cloncurry, where about thirty tenants were evicted a few years ago, and only two or three restored to their holdings. But I am assured that his lordship was hardly to be blamed, since his rents were no higher than those of his neighbours; and his tenants, who were badly advised, refused to meet his liberal advances. Land being so highly rented, there are no very great estates; and the condition of things is very different from that in Galway, since no property of any importance has changed hands for many years.

Naturally, on coming to Limerick, one's curiosity is excited as to the salmon-fisheries, and I am indebted to

Mr Alton, of the Shannon Fisheries Company, for much interesting information. The Shannon Fisheries Company owns five miles of the water, from Corbally, above the town, down to Cratloekeil below it. These fishings belong to the Limerick Corporation, which let them twenty-five years ago on a ninety-nine years' lease to a Mr Pool Gabbet. Mr Gabbet sold his interest to Mr Malcolmson of Waterford, and subsequently it was resold in the bankruptcy court to the present proprietors for £11,000. Though the sum sounds a small one, they did not make a very good bargain. The original owners had claimed the Shannon fisheries down to the mouth; but subsequently, and after much litigation, their rights have been limited as I have stated. The value of the Shannon fisheries generally has been greatly increased by protection, &c.; but, on the other hand, obstructions and indiscriminate fishing lower down have much diminished the takes of the upper proprietors. Below Cratloekeil there are now no less than forty-four stake-nets, belonging to various riparian landowners, and the drift-nets are much used in the estuary by fishermen. The drift-net is both cheap and very deadly. It costs only from £3 to £5—£3 more must be paid for a licence—and it is some 200 yards long by 12 feet deep. One end is attached to the boat, the other drifts with the tide. The net is weighted below, and buoyed with corks above. When a catch is made a cork is seen bobbing; the fishermen row up and take out the salmon. Some years ago, before these drift-nets came into common use, the Shannon Company sometimes took 1500 salmon in a day. One of the most interesting objects on the river is the Lax weir, which is the upper limit

of their water at Corbally. Lax is the Scandinavian for salmon, as gourmands may know who are familiar with the smoked red flakes sent over in tins from Norway; and it was the Danes who built that venerable weir across the Shannon which is still overlooked by the ruins of its guardian castle, dating from the twelfth century. The Shannon Company send all their fish to London, to be disposed of by a salesman on commission. That is also the practice of some of the lower proprietors. But others of them, and all the small fishermen with the drift-nets, sell the fish as they land them to local buyers, who act as middlemen, forwarding their purchases to England, and having supplies of ice and boxes in readiness for packing. The great local salmon mart is the village of Glin, known in England as giving a title to the knight "of that ilk." Where the rod-fishing is good it is extremely valuable—so valuable that nothing worth trying is available to strangers. All is let at long prices—as much as £300 to £350 being given for 50 to 100 yards, where fish are to be taken in favourite pools through the season. This year the season, owing to the unusually dry weather, has not been a very successful one. Yet I am told by Captain Vansittart, a famous fisherman, that on his water at Castle Connell, seven miles above Limerick, he had killed this spring, in seventy-six days, 104 salmon, of one ton weight. O'Shaughnessy, the once-renowned Limerick fly-maker, died many years ago, though a son-in-law carries on the business. But they tell me that O'Shaughnessy's wares were greatly overrated; that his hooks might do for former days, when a fish weighing 20 lb. was a rarity, but that they would never have held the 40-

pounders which are frequently gaffed at present. All the hooks come now from the needle-makers in England, though they are dressed on the shores of the Shannon, and many of the gentlemen are in the habit of tying their own. The flies used in the spring are large and gaudy, tied with top-knots of the golden pheasant and such gorgeous colours. In summer, when the peel are coming up, the flies are somewhat quieter and smaller. What shows, by-the-by, that after all the range of the best rod-water cannot be very great, is that there are only about sixteen boatmen in the service of the rod-fishers.

XV.

TRALEE, KERRY, *September* 15.

NO one fortunate enough to have fine weather when at Limerick should neglect the excursion to Killaloe. The bright little town lies seventeen miles up the Shannon, and half a mile above it the Shannon flows out of Lough Derg. For myself, I had been favoured with one of those sudden changes of climate which seem peculiar to this country of contrasts and sharp transitions. I had left Connemara in cold and downpour. In Galway the dripping wet had been so warm as to be unpleasantly enervating. At Ennis the skies had cleared as by enchantment; and there and at Limerick the heavens were cloudless, while the transparent atmosphere was so dry, though balmy, that the contents of my portmanteau began to feel more comfortable to the touch. Nothing could be more beautiful than the deep bright blue of the river, as I had seen it at Corbally under the noonday sun, and the thick shade of the trees in the Corbally Gardens was agreeable rather than otherwise. The railway drive to Killaloe along the Tipperary side of the river lies on the whole through a rich country, although here and there we

have a half-reclaimed peat-bog, or rushy and swampy fields that would be all the better for draining. The people seem to devote themselves to breeding donkeys; and it was a pretty sight to see the rough-coated colts frisking around their sober dams, or scrambling like overgrown kids about the grass banks. Nearly half-way to Killaloe we pass Castle Connell, surrounded by masses of wood, sheltering handsome country houses from the winds that must sweep down in the winter from the round green hills beyond. Castle Connell, like Killaloe, is a famous rod-fishing quarter; and here are the great rapids of Doonass, where the river throws itself over the broad bed of rocks, sloping rapidly downwards for nearly half a mile. But, beautiful as is the situation of Castle Connell, that of Killaloe is more enchanting. Turning out of the little station, where the train runs into something like a *cul de sac* in the side of a mountain, the first object that strikes you is the long, low, narrow, hog-backed bridge, supported on thirteen irregular arches. The bridge connects the counties of Tipperary and Limerick; and on the Limerick bank stands the little town, looking endways on to the river from a terraced slope, out of some old-fashioned gardens with their clipped yew hedges. To the left is the ivy-covered abbey church, with its quaint architecture within and its clamorous jackdaws without. There are trees everywhere hanging over high garden walls below the bridge, and almost the only blot on the landscape is a preternaturally ugly weir, while above is an extremely picturesque one. Nothing can be prettier than the walk up the narrow valley, following the river round a gentle sweep of half a mile or so towards the pass between the

hills where it winds out of Lough Derg. The heights to the right are clothed with woods, till the woods give place to the green pastures, which shade away in their turn into round ridges of brown moor. A narrow strip of bright meadow-land borders the water, and a herd of red Durhams are standing belly deep in a side channel, switching the troublesome flies with their tails, behind the breakwater of a sedge-grown island. Strolling back by a path that leads up towards the town over the crest of a grassy eminence, when we turn we get a glimpse of the lower end of the lough, which is no less than twenty-two miles in length, averaging in breadth from two to three miles. The glassy sheet of water is shut in upon all sides by green spurs of the Limerick and Tipperary mountains, often skirted by black belts of timber. Altogether, with the boat in the current beneath, from which an angler is wielding a formidable rod, it is as graceful a scene—savage, pastoral, and piscatorial—as any aspirant to the Academy need care to paint.

Of a very different character is the scenery on the Lower Shannon, on the tideway between Limerick and Tarbert. The steamer, slipping her moorings, swings slowly round with the current; then for several miles we thread the comparatively narrow channels, where the river twists slightly between mud-banks and sand-spits. On many of these banks and spits are cairns of stones supporting frameworks of iron carrying primitive beacon lights, the illumination of which can scarcely be costly. Now and then we steam past rocky reefs strewed with sea-weed, on which sea-fowl, strings of waders, and flocks of lapwings are busy picking up a living among the shell-

fish. Till at last it fades out of sight in its smoke, the city of Limerick, with its mills, its cathedral tower, and the tall spires of its churches, is a picturesque object behind us. Then of a sudden the river expands into a wide lake-like estuary, and in fact, the Lower Shannon is a succession of sea-loughs, half closed in at not unfrequent intervals by low promontories or bold bluffs and headlands. The scenery is far from grand: it can hardly be called fine; and certainly I should not recommend the voyage in wet or even in misty weather. But it has a great charm of its own, with an infinite variety of objects, on so glorious a day as that on which I saw it. Except for the occasional fine-weather haze in the distance, the lights were clear and vivid in the extreme, and there was scarcely a ripple on the surface of the water. Now we are in a great circular lough with low sandy shores; now we had passed into another and a narrower one, with banks that were wellnigh precipitous; while always on the Clare shore was the range of the mountains which breaks into bold headlands between Kilrush and the watering-place of Kilkee. As everywhere in Ireland, timber was scarce, which made one appreciate the more those respectable woods which embosom some of the few mansions along the banks. The residence I admired the most was on the northern shore, with soft shelving lawns and a full southern exposure, while it was protected from the more violent winds by its hills and its lofty trees. Were I to covet any man's seat on the Shannon, it would certainly be that of Colonel White. Another fine place, though with the disadvantage of a northern exposure, is Glin, the woods of the park coming up to the little town, and the park

wall running along the brink of the Shannon, with only a road between. But what strikes the fancy more than the finest of the modern mansions are the venerable ruins, of which there are many, from castles once evidently of considerable pretensions, to the tall, square, lonely keeps which are common in all this country. By far the noblest of those ruins is that of Bunratty, near the mouth of the river of the same name, and once the stronghold of the chief of the O'Briens. Three miles below Glin the steamer stands in towards the little harbour of Tarbert, effectually protected against the Atlantic gales by the promontory at the back tipped by its lighthouse. But the idea of a port with a pier is delusive, and disembarkation is as awkward a business as can be conceived. With much manœuvring the steamer is laid alongside of a lofty lighter moored out in the stream. It is easy enough passing on to the lighter, but much more difficult to leave it; and elderly ladies or gouty gentlemen might have to stay there till a chair was rigged up in slings. For the only way of exit is by a ladder slightly sloping inwards from the perpendicular, and leading down to the boat rocking below. I helped to haul up one portly lady, and hard work it was. Yet, contrary to the Latin proverb, the ascent is less dangerous than the descent. The luggage being pitched down anyhow, the passengers must slip down somehow, with sundry abrasions of knees and ankles, to be pulled to the pier and hustled out on a stone staircase washed by the waves and slippery with sea-wrack.

On that voyage of thirty-seven miles to Tarbert, we passed one of her Majesty's gunboats lying at anchor; we met a brig of about 200 tons; and besides the clumsy

boats that occasionally came off from the villages, we saw a single primitive craft, the stem being undistinguishable from the stern, laboriously paddled by a couple of men in a fashion still more original than the build. That was the whole of the traffic on the great waterway to the drowsy port that lives by its retail trade and a few flour-mills and bacon factories. In short, the Shannon reminded me of the noble but grass-grown approach leading to a mansion built almost regardless of expense, but of which only a single wing is tenanted. Yet what a noble river this Shannon is, and how much must have been made of it in English or American hands! It would have enriched the half of Ireland before now, turning the flow of its surplus prosperity on to the other half. It drains 4500 square miles; it is the natural outlet for fifteen counties. At an expense absolutely insignificant compared to the certain results, it might be made navigable from the lake where it has its source to the sea. In fact, it is rather a chain of fresh and salt water lakes than a river running into an estuary. All that would be necessary would be some dredging, some blasting, some lighting and buoying, and now and again possibly a broad side-cut to turn such rapids as those at Castle Connell. But whatever the outlay might be, were the works carried out on a sufficiently extensive scale, the profits could hardly fail to be incalculable. But then energy and harmonious combination are wanted, at least, as much as capital. Piers, for example, should be made at the towns and villages on the banks. Side roads should be opened up to bring remote valleys in the wilds into communication with markets. There are hundreds of thousands of acres that might be reclaimed

and rendered arable, or drained to improve the hill grazings. The iron and coal mines on Lough Allen might be worked; a small Middleborough or Barrow-in-Furness might be started somewhere; the fleeces from the sheep upon a thousand hills might be woven in woollen mills at Limerick; nor is there any reason why the city should not import raw American cotton and compete with the Manchester looms with cheaper home labour; while with native coal and direct foreign importations, it might cut the ground from under the feet of Glasgow shippers. It may be said that all this is an idle dream; but even were the coal and the iron of inferior quality, it is a dream that would certainly be speedily realised were the Shannon and its vast watershed "settled up" by English capitalists. Each sufficient holding reclaimed would convert the tenant to at least passive loyalty, as each labourer employed at good wages would be so far bound over to keep the peace.

Meanwhile landing at the little harbour of Tarbert, which is a long mile from the town, we are among the usual signs of semi-stagnation. There is a big flour-store, as usual, belonging to the Messrs Russell; there is an iron-store next door to it, and nothing more. The chief industry of the straggling little place seems to be salmon-fishing, and the salmon almost drop into the fishermen's mouths. You drive the stake-nets, and the fish entangle themselves; you cast the drag-nets to drift with the tide, and the fish are taken out to be knocked on the head with the smallest possible expenditure of trouble. As many as seventy salmon are sometimes taken out of the stake-nets at a single tide; and I was told by my intelligent car-driver of a haul last year

which sounds miraculous if not fabulous. I only repeat the story as it was told me. Last year the owner of one of the stake-nets opposite Tarbert landed in a couple of nights £1000 worth of fish. By an odd coincidence it was on the nights of Saturday and Sunday, when the stake-nets, according to law, should be left open. Threatened with prosecution, the fortunate gentleman quietly replied that if the case was proved against him, having realised his £1000, he should have great pleasure in paying his fines. The case was never proved, and he pocketed the undiminished profits. According to the same authority, even gentlemen who retain their fishings in their own hands are exceedingly lax in their observance of the Act. The watch kept up cannot be very strict, since there is but a single boatful of water-bailiffs, with their headquarters at Tarbert, to look after eight miles of estuary. When these bailiffs find a net shut that should be open, they are supposed to cut it and then proceed to lodge information. Besides that, they are charged with overhauling the boats casting the drift-nets, to see that each crew is duly provided with a licence. The Shannon fish are steadily increasing in size, and the largest taken this year weighed 72 lb. Tarbert used to be a busier and brisker place before the opening of the Kerry Railway. Then there was more than one steamer on the Shannon, and forty or fifty cars would be pulled up at the landing-place awaiting the arrival of tourists from Killarney. It is not difficult to picture the scramble and the hubbub of so many hungry competitors for custom, and one feels sincerely grateful to escape it nowadays. Nothing can well be duller than the drive to Listowel. At the head

of Tarbert Bay was a great stretch of mud-flats, with pools and salt-water streams, left by the receding tide, said to afford excellent wild-fowl shooting in the winter. Then the road lies along a high bleak level, through peat-bogs, cultivated in patches, and swampy and rushy meadow-land. Most of the cottages were miserable enough, yet here and there was a comfortable small farm-steading, with its little oasis of land bearing heavy crops of oats and hay. Before one of these steadings was as fine a herd of shorthorn cows as one could wish to see milked. As all the land appears to be of much the same character, that shows what might be done by liberal expenditure on a system of thorough draining. Indeed nearly forty years ago the capabilities of these very properties were fully admitted in evidence before a Royal Commission. During these forty years little can have been done; and most of the men were shamefully ragged. At a crossing of the roads a group had gathered, who, except that their figures were sufficiently muscular, showing no signs of low living, might have been so many scarecrows collected from their own potato fields. Fancying them a band of itinerant beggars, I inquired of the driver who they might be, and was informed they were merely farmers "smoking and taking their diversion" after the labours of the day.

After such a display of what must be destitution in any other country, it was somewhat of a surprise to find Listowel a well-built and apparently prosperous town. Immediately around it there is well-cultivated land, with some mansions standing in their well-wooded parks. The next day was Sunday, and there was a curious scene at the railway station after breakfast,

when the mail train for Tralee was expected. At least a dozen of cars on two wheels and four wheels were in waiting. On the platform was a mob of expectant spectators. The train drew up, doors were thrown open, and many second-class carriages disgorged their contents. There was a rush at the railway wicket and the cars. Then the passage was forced with a violent scattering, as of so many Congreve rockets; the cars were charged, carried by storm, and over-crowded. The arrivals were pleasure-seekers from Limerick and the intermediate stations bound for the little watering-place of Ballybunnion, on the northern shore of the Shannon; and for the sake of a happy afternoon by the river they were to be jolted over eighteen rough Irish miles thither and back. But if the middle classes here toil hard for their pleasure, the lower orders take it listlessly and frugally enough. Under the windows of the hotel at Tralee, but especially before and after divine service, was gathered a mob of loungers, who scarcely stirred from their stations throughout the day. Not a few of them, no doubt, might be town folk, but the most were evidently peasants, and many of them had brought their pitchforks, apparently for the convenience of leaning upon. It was a sort of agricultural *petite Bourse* upon the boulevards of Tralee, where the people talked pigs, oats, &c., and occasionally politics, judging from what I heard as I struggled through the crowd. Some were decently dressed, but the scarecrows were infinitely in the majority. There were short-waisted, buttonless evening coats that might have done duty two generations back at levees at the Castle or Dublin dinners. There were faded dressing-robes, which were evidently

heirlooms, and there were coats so ragged as to be unmistakable vouchers for the sobriety of their wearers, since no one not perfectly steady and self-possessed could possibly have slipped his arms into the sleeves. But though whisky shops with the shutters up had everywhere their doors open, I am bound to say there were few cases of drunkenness. It is true that these tattered pockets were hardly likely to be well lined; but what struck me in the groups of loungers all along the long street was the odd mixing of classes. Fellows in smart though slangy attire, who might have passed for the old squireens, kept company with the lowest and least reputable of the ruffians, and were probably laid under contribution. As rags and disreputability generally go together, the crowd, taking it as a whole, was far more sinister-looking than any I had yet seen. Even in the Maamtrasna country it required an effort of the imagination to believe that the men I met might be murderers or privy to murder. But with a third of these Kerry men, though appearances might play them false, the hang-dog countenances in cases of suspicion would be damning indirect evidence as to previous character. The Blennerhasset Arms at Tralee is perhaps the best inn of its class at which I have hitherto put up. The attendance, superintended by a friendly old waiter who has been twenty-eight years in the house, is excellent; nor have I ever sat down to more comfortable plain meals. The inn is so good, indeed, that one is inclined to regret that the immediate neighbourhood of the town is not more attractive, though there are pretty private grounds hard by to which the public are admitted. I walked out to the port, which

is a mile and a half away. I read in the guide-book that Tralee is the largest seaport in the south-west,—that it presents scenes of considerable bustle and animation. Seeing that there were only two or three small ships, waiting apparently to load the timber which was stacked hard by, there could hardly be much bustle, even on a Monday. Two or three other vessels were lying under the lee of an island many miles away in the offing. The little river, which runs through a dreary stretch of mud-flats, is not navigable, and a canal of about a mile in length connects a little dock with the bay. But the seaward view is fine and really grand to the southward, where a range of hills of noble outline drops into the Shannon below one of the loftiest, the promontory at the base of it being Brandon Head.

XVI.

KILLARNEY, *September* 17.

I SAID something in my letter from Tralee of what might be done by reclamation in the valley of the Shannon. Since then I have heard of alluvial meadow-land recovered and embanked between Limerick and Tarbert, which is yielding £10 per acre. I spoke of good farms among the peat-bogs between Tarbert and Listowel, which showed the profits the landlords might derive from capital laid out upon thorough drainage. I have conversed with a gentleman who has lately gone to work there. He spent £8 per acre on improving the bog, and was offered £9 for the first year's crop all standing. These significant facts and figures would seem to be encouraging, and so in a sense they are. A time may come when a tranquillised Ireland may support a large and yet prosperous population. But meanwhile one hears the same sad story everywhere—the state of the country and the influence of the land agitation on men's minds are fatal to all intelligent enterprise. I mentioned that Mr Mitchell Henry had assured me that he could not have undertaken of late years the works he has carried out so successfully, and to the infinite benefit

of his tenantry. So I heard at Tralee, from Sir Henry Donovan, of the failure of a syndicate to be formed for the development of waste lands in the neighbourhood. Sir Henry's residence is within a few miles of the town, and with the other gentlemen co-operating, he possessed all the advantages that local knowledge of people and places could give. The money—£60,000—had been found; the half of it, I believe, was to be advanced by Government. The syndicate had actually spent certain sums on preliminaries, when those experienced gentlemen were forced to draw back and sacrifice what they had expended, rather than risk the whole of the capital —raising, moreover, an unknown amount of ill-feeling. They found they had been counting without the jealous susceptibilities of the people, who would play the dog in the manger about lands in which they had neither a prescriptive interest nor any indirect concern. Yet nowhere more than in northern Kerry is there greater need for such philanthropic undertakings, or more apparently obvious openings for them. There is bog and undrained land in abundance, which would well repay cultivation. The holdings on even the best-managed estates are too often miserably small, having been infinitesimally subdivided; and in some of the wildest and most sterile of the upland glens the inhabitants are densely crowded.

Strange to say—and it shows the strength of local habits in Ireland—the half-starving peasants here never eke out their means by going after harvesting wages in England; and that goes far to account for the rags which struck me so disagreeably in the streets of Tralee. It follows as a matter of course that those districts have been infamous for outrages. At this moment they are

more actively unsettled than even "Joyce's country"; and nothing but the rigorous administration of the Crimes Act keeps the dangerous classes in check. Thus a lady living near Tralee is under perpetual police surveillance. A gentleman travelling with me to the first station on the Killarney line pointed to a farm on the western heights, on which three successive occupants had been attacked. The first two, having been fired at and wounded, wisely took the hint as a notice to quit; the third, who had stepped into their shoes, preferring the chance of death to the certainty of starvation, was speedily and brutally murdered. My informant,[1] who has lately dispensed with a travelling police escort, got out to drive to his house which was in sight, where he has fortified his lower shutters, attaching alarum-bells to each, and where he would find his permanent police garrison awaiting him. Can it be expected that capital is to be tempted into a country where such a state of insecurity for life and property prevails? If any profitable agricultural work is to be done at present, it must be undertaken by men of the tenant class; and it is certain that many of these men have ample means at their disposal. It is nothing unusual for the tenant-right of a farm to fetch twenty-two and even twenty-five years' purchase. Whence does this money come? it may be asked. It is found, in the first place, I am informed, by the American Irish, determined to settle on any terms in their native country, and it is a creditable trait in their characters. It is found, in the second place, by local occupants of the larger farms, who have been saving

[1] My informant was Mr Hussey, whose house has been shattered by dynamite.

for many years and accumulating money in the banks. For it must be remembered that till the commencement of the land agitation, whatever might be the feelings of the tenants towards their landlords, there had not been a single murder in Kerry; and six policemen, for example, used to suffice for the barony of Castleisland, where now there are no fewer than sixty. These farmers receiving only 1 per cent from the banks for money on deposit, are comparatively indifferent as to the prices they pay for what they consider the only alternative investment. Out of the farms bought even at twenty-five years' purchase they will get more at all events than a miserable 1 per cent. Some of these men, by the way, must make considerable sums by horse-breeding or horse-dealing. I heard of one of them near Listowel with really valuable blood stock;[1] but the majority content themselves with occasional transactions in Connemara ponies. They send to pick up the ponies as ragged two-year-olds at from £4 to £5. After feeding them up and breaking them in, they are sold for children or for light phaetons at from £15 to £18. It is said that with that little mountain breed it is difficult or impossible to tell the age by mark of mouth, so that the shrewdest dealers are often puzzled. Even more money is to be made on the stout little Kerry horses. They may be had as yearlings or two-year-olds from £7 to £10; broken to the saddle or to harness at four they will bring from £35 to £40. Forty pounds had been given for the animal which drew me yesterday, and he struck me as dear at the money; for though the hindquarters and barrel seemed good for any quantity of work, the head and shoulders were coarse and common.

[1] The most valuable of his stallions has since then been

However, handsome is that handsome does; and he trotted cheerily away up hill and down dale, through one of the most enchanting domains in Europe. I have seen so much overpraised and overrated scenery, that I am become sadly sceptical as to highly coloured pictures, so that the rare surprises are the more agreeable; and it would be difficult indeed to exaggerate the beauties of the Killarney Lakes, or at least of Mr Herbert's domain of Muckross. Now that I am in a hackneyed tourists' country, it is needless to go out of my way to describe; and I have no idea of inviting my readers on the expeditions that are *de rigueur*, such as the Gap of Dunloe or the ascent of Mangerton. But it is impossible, after sketching many of the beauties of the west, to pass the glories of Muckross over in silence. For glorious it is, with attractions so unparalleled that they should be worth any money to an anxious and emulous millionaire, care-burdened because he cannot live up to his income. From the hills above to the shrubberies below, from the views up the glens to those down the lake from the house windows, everything is on a great, almost a colossal scale. The part of the deer-forest belonging to the Muckross property alone extends to 23,000 acres. The approaches by which I was driven through the grounds, from the lodge nearest Killarney to the Old Weir Bridge, are about six miles in length. They sweep at first through an open lawn, shelving downwards to the Lower Lake, and backed up and dotted over with noble trees. Among those trees to the left, a most impressive object is the grey ivy-covered ruins of the Franciscan Abbey of Muckross; and never did any community of monks, supposing they were well inured to the damp of the climate, withdraw from the world to a more delightful

retreat. Nor were creature-comforts neglected. The refectory would be admirably supplied for feasts as for fasts, with venison from the mountains and fish from the lakes. But having left the old abbey and the new mansion behind us, thenceforth we are lost in the labyrinths of the woods and the shrubberies, which stretch away beyond the Old Weir Bridge, lending the beauties of the place their exceptional character. The variety of the shrubs almost equals their luxuriance; and they flourish as plants only can flourish in a genial atmosphere and a perpetual drip. You see evidences of the damp in the mossy coverings that wrap the great spreading boughs of the tall oaks overhead. In some places the thickets are almost impervious, with their *chevaux de frise* of prickly hollies, beneath self-sown ash saplings and venerable yews. Then where a bit of cliff had been cut away, or where a loose pile of boulders crops up out of the copse-wood, the scanty soil is covered with purple heather bushes, which nevertheless sometimes attain the proportions of small trees. Brambles everywhere are matted about the roots of the hollies; the wild clematis trails over them with its hanging curtains in flowery festoons; and wherever they get light and air to grow are great beds of the graceful St John's wort, and the rose of Sharon with its orange stars. There are brackens and ferns too in rich profusion, especially where some spring trickles over a rock; and by-and-by we come on magnificent specimens of the arbutus, which appears to affect particular localities and to grow most kindly on some of the islands. As yet the arbutus shows nothing of the blaze of red berries which lights up these shrubberies and islands in the late autumn; but already there

is the beginning of a rosy illumination on the yews, and the mountain ashes hang out their ruddy berries in heavy clusters. All the time, as we drive along, the approach keeps rising and falling, as it follows the rapid swells of the ground.

If there is a fault to be found, it is that the thickness and continuity of those copses are excessive, and we would gladly welcome more frequent views of the lakes. But wherever the road touches the water, or when you get a sudden glimpse down some glade through the tangle of the trees, we can always pull up and enjoy the view. We look across the Lower Lake, with its rocky but richly wooded islands, to the dense woods in Lord Kenmare's domain of Killarney; while to the left are the bold round heights of the Tomies, interposing themselves between our vision and Macgillicuddy's Reeks, from which they are divided by the Gap of Dunloe. While always on the left hand, frowning down upon us and on the little Middle Lake, are the imposing masses of Mangerton and of Torc mountain, the former being nearly 3000 feet in height. Perhaps the finest of the effects in the way of a view is reserved for the last, as it ought to be. A footpath emerges from the woods at the bottom of a narrow sheet of water, with bushes bending their branches over its mirror from the rocks all around, beneath a lofty canopy of oak boughs. Full in front the woods close in on either side, where jutting rocks just leave an outlet to a little river rushing forth through a narrow ravine. The river is spanned by the single grey arch of a picturesque foot-bridge, the parapets of which have been crumbling away; it is the oldest bridge in the country, and built on a long-abandoned

footpath. And beyond the bridge, through the framework tracery of boughs and leaves, you gaze up a long and savage glen, winding away into black recesses of a double range of dark and lofty mountains. After that, had I not said more than enough of scenery, there would be a bathos in any other description. On all sides there are an infinite variety of charming views, but none that impressed me in the least like those of Muckross. Lord Kenmare's park, on the lower shore of the lakes, and at the other side of Killarney, would seem even more delightful than it really does seem did it not suffer by comparison. Yet there are few finer walks anywhere than the one I took, from his lordship's most distant lodge back to the town of Killarney, for his grounds are most liberally left free to everybody. The views of mountains that are more distant than those at Muckross are glorious: nothing could be grander than the Tomies and the Reeks, enveloped as they were in clouds and storm; the islands and the wooded headlands running out into the lake are beautiful, as they must always be; but you miss the setting of those rich shrubberies of Muckross, with the wild mountains hanging immediately overhead. I am told that Mr Herbert has cut great quantities of timber in the last twenty years; but assuredly we do not miss it. No doubt those tall Scotch firs, with their clean brown columns, have benefited greatly by the removal of their neighbours. So have the people of the town of Killarney, where the Herberts established a manufactory of cotton spools, which afforded occupation to many of the inhabitants, and which has lately been taken over by Lord Kenmare. And indeed the tourist might be grateful were more cutting to be judi-

ciously carried out; for along many of the roads he may drive for miles without a sight of anything save clouds and branches.

Muckross has always been a famous sporting property. The deer-forest of 23,000 acres is rented by Mr Amphlett, besides the deer-ground of Lord Kenmare, and lands belonging to Mr Herbert of Clogereen. For the actual shooting Mr Amphlett pays a rental of £2000, which would certainly be considered very cheap in Scotland. He is limited to forty stags; and last year he killed stags up to his limit, besides fifteen hinds. I am told he is a crack gun-shot also: last year he and his party had 1150 woodcocks, nearly 200 brace of grouse, 350 brace of pheasants, and 300 hares. As for rabbits, they are swarming on the hills and in the shrubberies. Muckross is considered, perhaps, the best cock-shooting in Ireland, some of Lord Ventry's covers near Ventry coming next. One thousand one hundred and fifty sounds a satisfactory bag of the "longbills" for a single season; but last winter was mild, and, of course, unfavourable. It is odd that the cocks should never breed in these most enticing covers, which the keepers assure me is the case. It is strange, too, that the black-game cannot be acclimatised, for the ground seems perfectly adapted to them in every respect: Mr Herbert twice tried the experiment, but gave it up in despair. There is fair duck-shooting, though snipe are scarce; and in hard winter wild geese come in with the cocks, flying backwards and forwards to the mountain loughs and tarns from their feeding-grounds in Kenmare Bay and other estuaries. I was sorry to hear that the eagles which used to have their eyrie in the

Eagle Mountain have been shot down and exterminated in the course of the last few years. It is to be remarked that the "forest" here is a forest veritably—not treeless and heathery wastes, as in the Scotch highlands. At least the very roughest of the mountains are covered to a considerable height with thick natural woods. The climbing and the walking must be extremely hard, and the stalking, as I should fancy, both difficult and precarious, though the woods must, of course, be driven by beaters. As for the famous deer-drives, when a single stag was pricked out and "harboured," picketed by a cordon of watchers through the night, and forced into the water next day, to be the prize of the one of the many beats that could capture him—they have been given up. I am informed that the practice has been abandoned because there are no hounds left in the county. But, whatever the reason, the fact is not to be regretted, whether in the interests of sport or of humanity. Talking of shootings, I may mention that at this moment 23,000 acres on Lord Kenmare's property, near Bantry, are being offered for a rental of £150. Some officers of a cavalry corps who had them last year made a mixed bag of 550 without including rabbits; so that, again calculating by a Scotch scale, they are far from dear at the money. And there is an inn at Glen Carra, nineteen miles from here, where the landlady keeps shootings in her own hands, which are open to her guests at the inn, when she has not let them *en bloc* for the season. Glen Carra, where, I am told, the hills appear to have been tumbled down on the top of each other, is the earliest woodcock ground in the county of Kerry. Last winter, two guns on two suc-

cessive days got twenty-one brace and nineteen brace. There are plenty of hill lakelets with a superabundance of small trout; but as to the fishing in the Killarney lakes, opinions vary. If you may believe the boatmen and the people here, it is very good; they tell stories of captures of wonderfully heavy salmon, and of monstrous lake-trout running to 24 lb., although they admit that the ordinary average is 3 lb. But I understand that Killarney has never had a very high reputation, and so am inclined to take these stories for what they may be worth.

I must say one word by way of postscript as to the hotels. Nothing can well be more comfortable or better managed than the great railway establishment close to the station, in which I am now writing. It stands in extensive grounds and gardens of its own. There are always cars or public conveyances at the doors; and when the stay at Killarney is only to be for a day or two, I should say, being the most central, it is decidedly preferable to the others. For a longer sojourn, there are arguments in favour of the hotels on the lake, or commanding fine views of it. And had I come to do the country as leisurely as it ought to be done, I think I should put up at the three leading houses in succession, as pious Catholics will stop at sundry stations on their pilgrimages. Go where you will, you cannot escape the nuisance of being beset by beggars, boatmen, and guides, by car-drivers hungry for fares now that the tourist supply is running short, and by wayside vendors of whisky and goat's milk and other beverages equally poisonous and detestable. It would be wise and benevolent if the local authorities, in their own interest and ours, would do something to abate an almost intolerable nuisance.

XVII.

GLENGARIFF, CORK, *September* 20.

KERRY, or at least the western side of the county, is almost entirely held by great landowners. The extent of Lord Kenmare's barren territory may be estimated from the fact that before recent reductions of rent —nor do I understand that they were very heavy—his rent-roll was something like £60,000. Mr Herbert of Muckross had about £16,000. Then, as we set our faces to the south, come Lord Lansdowne, Lord Bantry, Lord Ventry, &c. Good and easy landlords as many of them have been, the tenants for the most part are miserably poor. There is little tillage—only potato patches with a few roods of oats or barley here and there—and the land, as in North Donegal, is roughly measured by so many cows' grass. Each family may have, as a rule, from three to ten cows, with some rights of commonty on the hills where they feed a few sheep or goats. The tenants must have a hard struggle to support themselves, with no harvesting wages to look to. Yet the country, poor as it may appear, is really inadequately populated. There is rich soil along the lakes and on the rivers and estuaries which might be manured with sea-weed and by

other means. Much might be done by hill-draining to cover those hills with herds of an improved breed of cattle. In short, an enterprising capitalist with his hands unfettered might incalculably raise the value of estates that are larger than many German Principalities. Unhappily the landlords have missed their opportunity. Had they chosen to expend money before the land disturbances, no one would have objected to their doing as they liked with their own. Now it is very different. In Kerry, perhaps more than anywhere else, the people would resent any encroachment on what they have come to regard as their rights. Elsewhere, if the land agitation has fettered the landlords, the security assured for improvements may have stimulated well-to-do tenants. Though the improvements may be often unsystematic and unscientific, they are undoubtedly being carried on piecemeal to a very considerable extent. Hereabouts it is not so, nor can it be so. The Kerry men do not want intelligence, but they want energy, and above all they want money. But one in ten or in a score of the crofters is fairly well off, and if he be a prudent man he makes as little of his property as possible, for the nine impecunious people will set upon their neighbour with substance, urging him to back accommodation bills. And as they are all more or less of cattle-breeders, with the fall in the prices of cattle of late, during the last year or so times have been exceptionally bad. It is terrible to think of the straits they might have to pass through were a general blight to fall on the potato grounds. For here the state of things, with the very material exception of a great rise in the price of labour, must be similar to what generally prevailed in Ireland before the memorable

famine. The few who are comparatively wealthy are said to have been doing pretty well by selling Kerry cows to fancy purchasers. For example, a gentleman told me yesterday that he had been accosted in the Gap of Dunloe by an illiterate breeder who begged him to decipher certain addresses of Englishmen who had written to have cattle sent over to them. The black Kerry race are graceful or at least game-looking animals; they are excellent milkers, giving a large proportion of cream. There must be herds of them in the country, I presume, but for myself I have seen very few. Cattle are pastured upon all the hilly ranges through which I drove, between the deer-forests of Lords Kenmare and Bantry; but they were crosses, and coarse crosses, with hardly an exception. There has not been much assisted emigration from this Killarney neighbourhood, though a good many people have been going out on American remittances. And I am informed that with the Kerry man it is rather "lightly come, lightly go." When he has made a little money in the States, he thinks nothing of a flying trip home to pay a visit to his kinsfolk. A more touching trait of strong family devotion is shown in the self-sacrificing behaviour of poor Kerry girls who are being overworked in the American factories. Out of their hard-earned savings they will send home at short intervals cheques for £2 and £3 for the support of their aged parents.

The high and massive walls, handsomely coped with stone slabs, which enclose the Muckross domains for many miles along the road to Kenmare, are strongly significant of the cheapness of labour in the olden time. In fact, when the broad highway along which we were

driving was begun in 1826, any number of men could be procured at three shillings a-week, whereas now they would receive at least 2s. 6d. a-day. Then horse labour was reasonable in proportion; now the cars, at least, in this land of tourists, are at fancy prices compared to the more northerly districts of Ireland; while the cost of horses, which I referred to in my last letter, goes some way towards justifying the hotel-keepers' charges. Leaving these Muckross enclosures behind us and emerging from the woods, we pass the point at which I had turned backwards from my expedition to the Old Weir Bridge. Thenceforth the country was new to me, and it is fortunate that I am come nearly to the end of my tour, for it becomes impossible to pile sensation on sensation in simple descriptions of all one admires. Comparisons are odious; but I know nothing in the Scotch Highlands that surpasses the stretch of Killarney lake scenery, and I am inclined to doubt whether anything there rivals it. To be sure, both yesterday and to-day I have been revelling in all those beauties in the most perfect weather. In fact, the weather has been so fine of late that the Killarney folks sanguinely express the opinion that the climate of the west is being revolutionised; though they seem to nurse their hopes on inadequate encouragement, since the very last September the month was so wet that the level of the lake was eleven feet higher than it is at present. Could they count upon such Italian heavens as those of to-day, they might surely multiply hotels and conveyances *à discrétion*. There are the mountains on the one side, the lakes on the other; now the road would plunge into the shadows of the woods, and now it would emerge on

some esplanade grooved along the sides of the hills, whence you looked back on the most glorious of panoramas, with the silvery lakes embraced by the mountains. Sometimes it was one of the lakes that lay immediately beneath; sometimes it was a billowy sea of foliage, whence there rose a murmuring and a rustling of the leaves dominated by the rush of the hidden river. In one of these graceful natural woods we looked down the chimneys of a picturesque little cottage, several hundred feet below. It had been built, the driver said, on the site "of the tint in which the Queen tuk her tea" on her Majesty's memorable visit to Killarney. As we climb along above the upper lough the scenery gets barer and wilder; yet the change to the sternness of sterility is hardly for the worse from the picturesque point of view. On the opposite side we see the serpentine car-road, leading up to the rough bridle-path that threads the Gap of Dunloe. To the left of the Gap is the eastern face of Macgillicuddy's Reeks, hiding, however, the loftiest summit of the chain; to the left is the round smooth mass of the Purple Mountain, the most easterly of the Toomies. There are two or three boats out on the Upper Lake far below us, though the fishermen had better have stayed at home for all they were likely to catch in such sunshine. I believe several of the farmers in the poetically named "Dark Valley," behind "The Gap," offer tolerable entertainment to enthusiastic anglers. And had the time hung heavily, which it certainly did not, the driver was lightening the way with reminiscences and legend. As a capital companion, full of fancy and information on all subjects, I can strongly recommend Mr John Murphy, who is in the

service of the Railway Hotel. There was the old road, running along the opposite slope of the valley, and dating from days when there were no cars in the country. The vehicles were low sledges with small wheels of solid wood, such as I described on my visit to the Inishowen peninsula as in use for hauling turf. The only carriages in the whole of these districts belonged to Lord Kenmare, Mr Herbert of Muckross, and Mr Daniel O'Connell. So lately as the times when the Liberator, as they still call him, had all "the boys" at his beck and call, when he came beyond Tralee on his visits to Derrynane, he always sent due warning in advance. Then, as when Arthur Young was being forwarded through the country by courteous hosts, bands of the people would be awaiting him at the "bad bits" to take out the horses and drag his vehicle, having previously cleared or smoothed the worst of the obstructions. At that time the only path from Killarney to Kenmare lay over the *col* between Torc and Mangerton Mountains. Going to Kenmare, the wayfarers cut down the ash or hazel saplings, lashed them together, and lowered themselves down the precipices. Coming the other way, they borrowed a ladder from a keeper of the Herberts, who inhabited a lonely shieling, and so descended on that side in comparative comfort.

The driver had his story, too, about the eagles of the "Eagle Mountain," as to which I have spoken before. The eyrie was in the face of the cliffs, in a situation so inaccessible that it had never been attempted, till one fine day, when an adventurous youth of eighteen was lowered by his comrades over the precipice. Dangling at the end of the long plumb line, he was still many yards away from the eaglets, which he could see sitting

on the ledge by a well-stocked larder, so he renounced the enterprise, and gave the signal to be drawn up. The friction of the rope detached a stone—the stone struck him on the head, one temple was stove in, his nose was smashed, and half his teeth were knocked down his throat. Nevertheless the lad lived, recovered his senses, and survived to the good old age of eighty. There was a companion legend of a salmon, which is undoubtedly true, since all the people about are ready to swear to it. Pointing away beyond the left shoulder of the Reeks, the driver indicated a natural punch-bowl in a hollow half filled with water. The salmon used to run up and swarm there three hundred years ago, coming from the Blackwater of Kerry. The priest of a great parish lying below had frequent occasion to cross a ford on the Blackwater in the discharge of his parochial duties. One night the splash of a salmon startled his horse, and the priest was pitched over the animal's head into the river. Extricating himself and regaining breath, he solemnly cursed the salmon, forbidding them to pass that ford in all time coming. Since then, by virtue of the curse, no salmon has been seen in the lough, although an angler casting from the ford could catch the trout above and the salmon below it. This year, for the first time for three centuries, a salmon has made his way up into the punch-bowl, and Heaven only knows what the omen may forebode—possibly the decay of priestly ascendency in these sceptical and ill-conditioned days. But tales and traditions of this kind abound in the West. I have a dozen or more in my recollection at this moment, and have merely given these two as samples. With but slight embroi-

dery they should be worth anything to the novelists who are casting about everywhere in search of novel ideas.

The road drags itself by slow curves and well-graduated ascents over the lofty watershed between the Lakes of Killarney and the Bay of Kenmare. At the summit, where the car must come to a crawl, we are beset by a clamorous band of beggars—old men and women, maidens and children. Except to children, I have never given a copper to mendicants in Ireland, and I must have carried away curses enough to sink a moderately heavy gunboat. But never was I more satisfied that I have acted wisely on the whole, than on hearing the "secret history" of these semi-savages. They ought properly to be the tenants of Mr Mahony of Dromore, who has a very large estate here. The estates were under trust or in insolvency for many years, during which these good poople did not pay one shilling. Mr Mahony having cleared his property, went to ask for the arrears in person, when the old lady I saw presiding over the can of goats' milk, which she tries to pour down the throats of the passengers, frankly told her landlord to "go to the divil," and be thankful that there were any cottages up there, as they had been able to offer his honour shelter; which it appears they had once actually done when a shooting party had been belated in the fogs. Mr Mahony, who by all accounts is one of the best-natured and most kindly of men, merely laughed and said no more. Since then the little colony has still sat rent free. It appears they are rich, and well provided with cows, which they carefully keep out of sight. Mr Mahony's experiences with his more re-

spectable tenants are a striking illustration of the contagious effects of the general rush for reductions, with reason or without reason. Notoriously his farms were absurdly low rented, yet his seventy farmers went unanimously to the Land Courts. In sixty-eight cases reductions were refused; and it is more than probable many of the rents might have been raised had it pleased Mr Mahony to press for a rise. The two exceptions in which rents were reduced were still more remarkable though in another way. Mr Mahony has built some of the best cottages and steadings in the country, along the shores of Kenmare Bay. The occupants of two of these cottages claimed reductions, not because the buildings were not worth the rent asked, not because they were unsuited to the size of the holdings, but briefly because the occupants preferred to live in pig-sties and objected to pay for anything better. And the Commissioners are said to have reduced the rents accordingly, giving effect to the tenants' wishes. I have referred to the reports of the proceedings myself, and merely give the story as I have heard it on good authority. But if it be true, it is difficult to conceive anything more discouraging to the enterprise of a liberal and spirited landlord.

Kenmare is prettily situated at the head of its long bay. But I was somewhat disappointed in the drive to Glengariff, though nothing can well be grander than the view from the crest of the mountain range that is crossed *en route* to it. Again, an excellent road by adroit engineering is carried up in long sweeps with easy gradients. We pass some good farmhouses on

Lord Lansdowne's, occupied apparently by tolerably comfortable graziers. And a tunnel is pierced through the hills below the top of the ridge, in which a shaft that has been driven downwards to admit light and air marks the border between the counties of Kerry and Cork. Emerging from the dimness into the sunshine, to the right are to be seen the mountains in Lord Bantry's deer-forest—so many mighty semicircular serrated ridges, standing out like jagged knife-edges against the sky. They look even higher than they really are, since they rise sheer out of the bay or the ocean; while full in front of us is Bantry Bay, with the usual archipelago of rocky islands, bounded to the further side by the hill ranges of southern Cork. Making an immense *détour* round what is a distance of half a mile as the crow flies, the road circles downwards into the woods of Glengariff. Glengariff means the rough or coarse glen, and never was a valley more appropriately named. It is all "brown heath and shaggy wood," with a stream hurrying down among its boulders through the brushwood in the bottom, and rugged strata of grey rock cropping up everywhere. Yet these rocks are often draped thickly with ivy; honeysuckle and ivy-tendrils hang trailing from the trees; and nature has thrown a luxuriant mantle of many colours over what would be a scene of savage desolation, for already the leaves are assuming their autumn tints. Passing the charmingly situated shooting-lodge of Lord Bantry, as the road sinks towards Glengariff harbour, the scenery becomes softer and the vegetation richer, till at last, after driving before one bright little garden

with beds of brilliantly tinted dahlias and gladioli, we pull up at the door of Eccles's Hotel. Speaking of romantic situations, it would be difficult indeed to improve on this one. The hotel, which is a large establishment, stands exactly at the bottom of the harbour. There is a magnificent prospect of hill, wood, and island; and the tide actually washes the road before the house, which is protected from the sea spray by a broad fuchsia hedge. Glengariff must be admirable quarters for a week or two, with endless walks among the woods and rocks which surround it, with good boating in the sheltered bay, and amusement in the way of sea fishing. Consequently the hotel is always overflowing with company; it has a high reputation, and it appears to deserve it. The cooking is good, so are the wines, and nothing can exceed the civility of the people, who appear to understand their business thoroughly, and have continually to tax their ingenuity to provide accommodation for belated guests. It stands in grounds and gardens of its own, commanding extensive sea views, and I believe that Mr White, the proprietor, has expended no less than £20,000 on the place. Above all, instead of the usual shelf or two of green and yellow cheap editions, there is a really ample stocked and well-selected library in cases all round a snug little sitting-room, which must be an invaluable resource in rainy weather. Of the other hotel, the Royal, I can say nothing personally, except that the situation is in no way inferior to Eccles's. I am told that the Cork and Bandon Railway Company have the intention of building another establishment here, and certainly there would

appear to be ample room for it. For Glengariff, though still far less known than Killarney, is overgorged with tourists throughout the season; and, thanks to the softness of the air in these well-protected hollows, there are visitors who protract their stay till late on in the autumn.

XVIII.

BANTRY, CORK, *September* 22.

COMING from Killarney, and after driving over the Alpine-like passes through the mountains, the road from Glengariff to Bantry seems almost tame by comparison. Yet in other circumstances it would be a thing to remember, though, as the views down the Bay are the chief attraction, much must depend on the clearness of the weather. Once well above the Glengariff woods, the foreground of the wide landscape is a dreary waste, somewhat thickly scattered over with dilapidated hovels. Here and there the stones have been cleared from the scanty, unkindly soil; but often the nearest nook of land available for the oats or the potatoes is many a stone's-throw away from the hut. In the way of an almost impracticable struggle for life, I saw nothing much worse in northern Donegal; and nowhere were the little herd-children more wretchedly dressed. Yet, strange to say, they seemed healthy enough, and by no means in very poor condition. No doubt they were breathing beautiful air, and the sunshine and the sea breezes had tanned them to the colour of their rags. Here, for the first time, I saw faces of the genuine

Spanish type. Two of these children, evidently a little brother and sister, struck me especially. They came gambolling from behind a bank, running after the car and begging, half in fun and half in earnest. They were a pair to make the most penurious of men pull his purse-strings. Both were lovely rather than simply good-looking. With their full, black, sparkling eyes, their white teeth, their dimpling cheeks, their brown olive complexion, their clay-coloured calico rags, and their brown legs and bare feet, they might have tumbled out of one of Murillo's canvases, from under a Seville canopy of vine-tendrils and fig-leaves. There was as much intelligence in their eyes as grace in their gambols; and one could not help speculating whether the little creatures were to go to America to make their way in the world and to marry well, or to struggle on upon those poverty-stricken hills till they found refuge at last with the rheumatism in the workhouse. Here we have distress as usual leading to disturbances and criminal outrages. Half-way to Bantry we pass the spot where the first of the landlords was shot at in southern Ireland. Mr Hutchins of Ardnageshel had driven out to Cook for rents. The assassins, who have never been detected to this day, missed the master, but murdered his unfortunate coachman, who was taken to the nearest police-station to die of a mortal wound. For the rest of the way the road goes winding round the heads of a succession of long narrow creeks and sea-arms; and there is one "bit," which should be singularly captivating to artists, where a river, rushing down through a wooded gorge, breaks in swirling pools, and forms cascades over the black rocks, beneath the arches

of a picturesque old bridge half hidden in masses of ivy.

As for Bantry, though the town comes down to the sands, it is literally built upon the rocks. The road leading up to the railway station is cut and blasted through rocks; great shelves and slabs of rock form an easy natural staircase, over which the people can clamber by shorter cuts to the doors of the Catholic church. At no time was Bantry a place of any importance; yet forty years ago it had upwards of 5000 inhabitants, while at present the population has been reduced by two-fifths. Suburbs of hovel-like cottages, though they are outwardly resplendent with whitewash, run on into one or two poor-looking streets, in which the most pretentious of the shops are general stores, where everything seems to be sold, from ironmongery and American sewing-machines to sweetstuff and national newspapers. Nowhere, even in western Ireland, is there so deplorable an example of the neglect of magnificent natural advantages. The lake-like bay, twenty-one miles in length, and from three to five in breadth, will bring the Channel Fleet along a fair waterway to deep moorings immediately off the town. Yet the only steamer that plies here is a small boat to Castle Berehaven, put on by the Cork and Bandon Railway since the extension of their line to Bantry last year. She brings live stock, butter, and eggs from a too densely crowded population in Lord Bantry's great peninsula of Bere. In this instance the arrival of the railway can hardly fail to do good to the place, simply because there is no sea-traffic to be harmed; while the company is laying itself out to develop the scanty resources of the district, and to bring in money by the promotion of

tourist traffic. It is needless to say that, as the people in the town are poor, so those wild districts stretching away to the west have been miserably backward in all respects. The late Lord Bantry, who had a reduced rental of about £10,000 from Bere, and who died only a few weeks ago, had been an improving landlord till the land agitation effectually brought his improvements to a standstill. Poverty and trouble go hand in hand again. Bere was one of the wildest and poorest districts in the west; and so we find it ranking next to the infamous Lough Mask country for the number and atrocity of its outrages. But some of the smaller, though still considerable landowners, whose fathers fifty years ago had begun a good work, reclaiming along the bay and building better cottages, appear long ago to have abandoned all attempts of the kind. Nowhere, as I am informed, is what one can hardly call the agriculture more barbarously primitive. The people grow potatoes, of course, and barley rather than oats. Barley is a safer crop, being not only very hardy, but sure of a sale to the brewers or distillers. The days are gone by in those districts when it was turned into hill-made potheen. The Crimes Act has at least had the effect of putting down the illicit potheen stills, since the hills are so frequently, if not regularly, patrolled, that it is impossible to prevent the smoke from being detected. I may mention, by the way, another effect of the Crimes Act in the rapid multiplication of the rooks, which here, as in the Inishowen peninsula, are becoming an intolerable nuisance in many places, since the farmers have been deprived of their guns. But if the unimproved holdings are sterile and unproductive, surely fishermen might have enriched

themselves by the harvests of the sea. Hitherto they have profited little by those riches, though fish are swarming in the bay and off the coasts, and great shoals of herring and mackerel come up in the season almost to the town. The boats have been bad at Bantry as everywhere else; and the men dare hardly face the weather in the waters which were dragged by the French and English trawlers. But the Bantry boatmen have been more amenable to reason than the prejudiced fisher-folk of the Claddagh colony of Galway. Mr Brady, the philanthropic Inspector of Irish Fisheries, took a great deal of trouble in sending fishermen from Bantry and from Dursey Island to the Fisheries Exhibition at South Kensington. There they learned many lessons which they have seriously laid to heart. And through the instrumentality of Father Davies, a most enlightened and paternal parish priest, Lady Burdett-Coutts has supplied them with improved nets and boats, which they have been beginning to use to much advantage. Now there are about twenty good seaworthy boats at Bantry, and the boatmen with their families ought to be living in comfort. I may mention, by the by, that Kinsale is the great fishing-station in these parts. Off the Head of Kinsale there is often a fleet of 600 craft, each of them averaging a crew of nine men and a boy. Of those craft about a hundred come from these coasts, over a hundred more hail from Dublin, and the rest are either French, Manx, or Cornish.

I have said that the Cork and Bandon Railway has been laying itself out to provide and extend facilities for tourists. The story of the enterprise is rather interesting; the directors and their enterprising manager, Mr

Gordon, have been sending considerable sums of money into this county, and, accordingly, it is to be hoped that they may go forward and prosper. At first they undertook all the service of conveyances and cars as far as Killarney, in connection with this railway, though those carriages were horsed and provided by the various hotel-keepers along the route. At the outset, I believe, they lost a trifle on the transaction; but very soon there were surplus profits. Thenceforward, although they still conduct the arrangements, they shifted the chances of losses or gains to the innkeepers, who have made an excellent thing of it in the present season. Now the company propose to extend a branch of this line from a station near Bandon to Clonakilty on the south Cork coast, which will open up some striking cliff scenery. They are going to carry on a tramway from Durrens, near Bantry, to the townlet of Schull, immortalised by Banin in his half-forgotten ballad on the "Sack of Baltimore"; while on the northern side of the tourist district communications are about to be opened between Headford on the Killarney branch of the Great South-Western Railway and Kenmare, the new line first turning the western shores of Loch Gulane, and subsequently the eastern slopes of Mangerton. It is to be hoped that all that may prepare the way for further extensions and other branch lines, though the engineering difficulties among the western mountains will be serious, and traffic, except in tourists, will be scarcely remunerative. After all, however, the county is neither better nor worse, so far as trade or national obstacles are concerned, than that on the Western or Argyllshire section of the Callander and Oban Railway. And with greater facilities of

approach, these back of the world gulfs, estuaries, and promontories, between Bantry Bay and the mouth of the Shannon, will be found seductively full of romantic story and adventure, when better means of communication make them less inaccessible. Even now there are fair though homely inns, where fishermen, sportsmen, and pilgrims in quest of the picturesque may find accommodation that is satisfactory, considering all things.

Even from a distance I have heard so much that is interesting about these parts that I have pretty nearly decided to return thither for my personal gratification. There are solitary stations on the most savage parts of the coast, whence telegraph-lines are being stretched to all parts of the world, and where little colonies of intelligent clerks keep each other company in the midst of the desolation through the short days and dreary nights of the winter. There are enchanted spots like Valentia Island, where the winter climate is infinitely milder even than that of the lower Lake of Killarney, and where plants that are almost semi-tropical flourish accordingly. The late Knight of Kerry used to pride himself in possessing the greatest fuchsia-tree in all the world; and was much relieved once when, after sending a special communication on the subject, he found that his favourite was not surpassed by another belonging to Mrs Blake of Renvyle, in Connemara. There are endless stories of smugglers and of wreckers. I have spoken to elderly people who have often gossiped with aged men who had made a business of smuggling up to the end of Napoleon's wars. Then, in spite of the efforts of his Britannic Majesty's revenue cutters and cruisers, heavily armed French luggers, carrying clouds of canvas,

were always swarming off the coasts. They shirked fighting when they could; they fought their vessel to the last plank when they were cornered. And the dissipations of the county gentlemen of those days demoralised their peasantry and dependants. Fishermen were on the watch to put off at the signal lights. Landsmen with led-horses and ponies were in waiting to carry off the casks and kegs, and so many a cellar was cheaply supplied with the best of clarets and cognacs from the Charente. There are still old stories, too, of wrecks and castaways, which may have perhaps been embellished by tradition. Thus, near Derrynane Abbey, is an ugly reef in a sea-nook, which bears the name of Carrig-na-Spaña, or the rock of Spain. It is said to have got the name from a Spanish vessel which had struck upon it. The captain, who was saved, in reasonable fear of the wreckers, dropped a chest of treasure overboard, carefully taking the bearings. He hit them off so exactly that forty years later his son and heir returned to the coast, heaved up the treasure-chest, and sailed away with it. And for more prosaically minded men there is wild sport to be had, which suggests the shooting of the mouflons in Savoy, or the hill sheep in the mountains of Cashmere. Near to Waterville on Ballinskelligs Bay, to the south of Iveragh, where there is a decent little inn as well as excellent salmon and sea-trout fishings, is an extensive range of rugged hills said to belong to nobody. At least the tenants, or rather the squatters, have never in the memory of man paid either rents or rates. And these precipitous hills are covered with goats which have strayed from the hovels and run wild. So far from the rough inhabitants objecting to

sportsmen, I am assured that they are only too happy to welcome them, since the wild animals tempt the tame goats to wander away into the wilderness. An odd incident by the way only occurred the other day at Ballinskelligs Bay, which shows that there are still waifs sent up on those shores, though they rarely take the shape of wreckage, owing to the scarcity of ships or steamers. A claim was sent in by the men of the coastguard station—they seem to have come upon the monster too late to profit by the fresh blubber—for the funeral obsequies of a dead whale, 63 feet in length by 26 feet in circumference. They demanded £12, 18s. 6d., and they got the money on the claim being admitted for sanitary reasons.

Starting from Inishowen in the north, I have come to Bantry in the extreme south-west, and so I bring these letters, in which I fear the descriptions must have been monotonous, to an end. But if descriptions of the scenery are necessarily monotonous, there is nothing monotonous in the social condition of the various districts I have visited, or in the character of the people who inhabit them. I have said all that I had to say as I went along, and have little left to add in the way of summing up. I am more thoroughly persuaded than ever of the impossibility of generalising on Irish matters with justice or truth. What is true of Donegal is false of Sligo; sketch the Connemara peasant conscientiously and closely after nature, and he caricatures the small farmer of Limerick;—so that, on the strength of the observations of a flying trip, it would be presumptuous to make impressions do duty for convictions. The Irish question is a complication of problems

or puzzles, like one of those masterpieces of misdirected Chinese ingenuity carved out of ivory, with wheels within wheels. But there are certain facts which must be obvious to the least intelligent or observant of men; and, indeed, I have recurred to some of these so often that I am almost ashamed to repeat myself. Crimes and disturbances are invariably to be found where ignorance and despair are the consequences of hereditary destitution. There is much land in West Ireland where the best that can be done is to clear it as soon as possible of its hopeless inhabitants. They can never get a decent living out of the soil, and a single bad season may land them any year in a famine. There is a vast deal of land, on the contrary, between the Bays of Donegal and Bantry, which would richly repay any sums that might be spent in judicious reclamation and drainage. What could never be used profitably for tillage would make admirable mountain pasturage; and as to these districts, the Nationalists are in the right when they maintain that Ireland is very inadequately populated. But, then, the landlords can do nothing there, even with the indispensable capital, except in some very exceptional instances; and any improvements that may be made must be made in the meantime by the tenants. Emigration, although in some of the counties it is being carried to excess, is a good thing and a bad thing. It is good, inasmuch as it must have lifted many paupers into a condition of comparative comfort, as is shown by the sums of money these emigrants are continually sending home. It is good, inasmuch as it tends to increase the size of holdings, and infinitesimal subdivision has been one of the greatest curses of Ireland. But, on the

other hand, and in the meantime, some of the most prosperous districts are being unduly deprived of the strong arms that should cultivate them; and each one of the emigrants who leaves Ireland for America carries away with him a bitter hatred of English rule. As for the farming here, it strikes me as leaving much to desire. There is little intelligence shown and no originality. Whether in the wastes of Donegal and Connemara, or in the rich alluvial lands along the shores of the Shannon, precisely the same old-fashioned system is perceived. It is simply to get as much out of the ground as possible, growing crop on crop, in defiance of scientific rotation, and leaving next year or the future to take care of itself. The hay is left out in the dripping climate till it blackens; the oat-sheaves are carefully thatched in with other sheaves, so as to exclude the sunshine and the breezes in the finest of "drying days." I have spoken repeatedly of the inferior quality of the butter, which might be produced in perfection with greater care. So it is with everything, with exceptions proving the rule, from the cattle down to the chickens; and I have a strong conviction that Irish farming must be pretty nearly what it used to be one hundred years ago.

With a people so conservative or so prejudiced, the Land Acts have done less good than they might have done; but I am bound to say that, on the whole, I am persuaded they have been of very great benefit. No doubt reduction of rent may often have been excessive, more especially as it reduces the landlord's income for all time. Still, as rack-rents were the logical results of the land-hunger, there can be no question that

the reductions, where the soil is of tolerable quality, must in most cases have given substantial relief; though the good done in that way is greatly diminished by the land craving which still shows itself in the shape of extravagant bids for the tenant-right of the farms. The man who gives twenty-five or thirty years' purchase locks away his spare capital as certainly and effectually as if a grasping landlord laid it under contribution. But of far more consequence than any reduction of rent is the security given for improvements. Now that the Acts have crippled and fettered the more spirited landlords, in that security lies the hope for the improvement of Ireland; for each tenant who sinks his money in the soil, binds himself over under substantial guarantees to loyalty and good behaviour; while, as he extends his holdings and is compelled to engage hands beyond his own household, he gives the employment which is so sorely needed in many districts, and helps to create a contented class of labourers.

One point I have hardly touched upon, and I hesitate to touch upon it now: I allude to the contributions that are levied on a poor people by their clergy. I have heard a great deal on the subject; I know nothing at all as a matter of fact. But I see, as every one must see, that any number of priests are living even in the poorer districts with every comfort about them; and, the labourer being no doubt worthy of his hire, I feel it invidious to criticise that state of things. And I know that many of those priests are indefatigable in their labours of charity and mercy, and that in the worst and hardest times, when there was no one else within call, they have stood between their flocks and oppression or starva-

tion. But I see, too, that the country is covered with substantial ecclesiastical edifices of all kinds that sometimes are actually magnificent. The parish churches are generally good, and often showy; the convents and schools are commodious and architecturally imposing; while not a few of the cathedrals, though one may take exception to the style and the taste, are of grand proportions, and must have been extremely costly. The Church revenues, which apparently must be swelling year after year, are drawn from a steadily dwindling population, and chiefly out of the pockets of poor farmers, of poorer peasants, and petty shopkeepers. It would seem as if, while the rents of the landlords were being reduced, the dues of the priests and bishops were being proportionally augmented. But, above all, if the country is to be peaceful and prosperous, the people must understand that there is an end to land legislation and a limit to concessions. Unhappily, now, that can only be the slow and deliberate growth of the consistent policy of successive and possibly of conflicting Ministries, who decline to sacrifice patriotism to party, and to truckle to temporary expediency for the sake of the Irish vote. And as to that dim political perspective, with all its doubtful contingencies, and a probability of seventy National votes in the balance, who dare speak of the future with any confidence?

I shall wind up these letters with a subject as to which I can speak with much more confidence. As to touring in Ireland, I can only repeat that for healthy and active people it is thoroughly enjoyable. In this life one must take the rough with the smooth, and in the West one must reckon with the practice of patience

through a certain number of wet days, and put up with a certain amount of roughing it in remote parts of the country. But there need be very little hardship to endure in Connemara or Killarney, and everywhere the traveller is rewarded by novel sights and by a variety of some of the grandest scenery in the kingdoms. Only take things good-naturedly and easily, and everywhere you will meet with extreme attention and civility, the good-natured people sparing no trouble about you in their leisurely happy-go-lucky sort of fashion. As for any danger, having very naturally overlooked that point all along, it has occurred to me opportunely before closing the letter; and Cockney tourists may be assured that they are safer in the West here than either in Epping Forest or on the Thames Embankment.

THE END.

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